He That Had Received
The Five Talents

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He That Had Received The Five Talents

By
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HE THAT HAD RECEI''ED THE FIVE TALENTS.

CHAPTER I.

The Village of Arderholm.

"A mouldered church, and higher
A long street climbs to one tall-towered mill."

—*Enoch Arden.*

On the West coast of Scotland a range of hill rises almost sheer out of the sea, with the quaint peak of Raven's Head standing out of it conspicuously, and vindicating from generation to generation the popular fancy embodied in its name. Between it and the shore, at a distance of nearly a mile, the ancient upheavals, that shaped the present surface of the earth, have lifted a knoll of commonplace form, known as Patricklaw. Down the gully between th two hills

gushes the stream of Arderburn. As soon as it clears the gully, it still runs with a rapid, but with a smoother flow, along the eastern side of a sloping basin amid the hills. At the end of half-a-mile it strikes another knoll of petty height, but impenetrable limestone, which sends it almost at right angles down to the sea through a short strath, at the foot of which has grown up in recent years the watering-place of Inverarder. The fertile patch of soil, thus skirted on two sides by the burn, and formed mainly of its silt, is the holm from which our village takes its name.

At the bend, where the burn sweeps round to the west, has stood from time immemorial a mill, drawing its water-power by a short lead from the upper reach of the stream, and emptying the spent water into the reach below. There is evidence to prove that of old the farmers of the district were under *thirlage* to the mill, and this made the place a natural centre for such petty trade as the neighbourhood required. A village had thus gathered—no one knows when—about the mill. Its houses mostly straggled along the lower part of the burn, which was used at once as a source of water-supply and as a channel for drainage, into which every sort of refuse was unthinkingly emptied. This old-fashioned

disregard of sanitation was fortunately neutralised to a large extent by the rapid current of the stream, which had force to sweep away most of the impurities consigned to it, and brought down at every moment a fresh supply of beautiful water from the misty highlands by which it was fed. The situation of the village was also otherwise favourable to health. Though lying in a hollow of the hills, it was yet open on the west to the prevailing breezes which came sweeping up the strath, purifying incessantly all the air of the holm, and filling it with the bracing salt odour of the sea.

CHAPTER II.

The Village Blacksmith.

"Under a spreading chestnut tree
The village smithy stands;
The smith a mighty man is he,
With large and sinewy hands;
And the muscles of his brawny arms
Are strong as iron bands."

—*Longfellow.*

At the period when our story opens, some sixty years ago, the village of Arderholm looked precisely as it may have done for centuries, and the inhabitants went about their quiet ways as if they had not yet been touched by the faintest ripple of the vast disturbances which steam and electricity were beginning to bring about in the life of the world. In those old days, one of the most attractive houses—in truth, the only attractive house—in the village was the cottage occupied by James Forbes, the blacksmith. Standing in a plot about half-an-acre in extent, at the head of the village, near the mill, it

gave all the impression of that substantial comfort which a thrifty tradesman can gather about his home, at least when he is not pent up in the lanes of a large town. And James Forbes was not only thrifty; he had all the success which a heart, untempted by the illusions of city life, need desire. In all the parish of Arderholm he had no rival in trade; and, what is better, he had so much of the old-fashioned workman's pride in honest work, that a rival would not have been welcomed by a single soul in the parish. Even from the outskirts of the surrounding parishes, farmers, who wanted a bit of smith-work particularly well done, brought horses, carts, and all sorts of agricultural implements to the smithy at Arderholm, while almost every day one of Lord Westholme's servants came over from Oakshaw House with something to be repaired. The smith, therefore, was seldom left idle for a minute during the working hours of the day. He always found employment even for one or two apprentices, sons of his neighbours, who learnt their trade at his smithy, and then went off to seek their fortunes in Glasgow or one of the other manufacturing towns of the West.

One evening in midsummer, James Forbes was sauntering about the little garden in front of his

cottage. The gentle exercise of tending his flowers was evidently to the strong man a delightful relief from the heavy, muscular strain of his trade; and and there was a certain pathos in the delicate touch with which his powerful hand fingered his favourite pansies, and in the softened look of satisfied admiration with which he gazed at the most successful specimens of his culture. He was so absorbed in this genial occupation, that he did not observe the approach of Robert Hamilton, the schoolmaster, coming down the road from the mill. He was, therefore slightly startled for the moment by the schoolmaster's voice calling, "Thae 're fine pansies, Forbes."

"Aye," the smith replied, "it's been an extraordinary fine year for flooers; the wather's just been grand."

The words were scarcely spoken when another voice was heard calling from the opposite side of the road, "It may be fine wather for flooers, James, but it's bad wather for oor crops." The voice came from Robert Hay, tenant of the farm of Borland, which lay about a mile above the smithy. He crossed the road while he was speaking, and took his stand beside the schoolmaster.

On hearing the voice, the smith turned round;

and, in accordance with local custom, addressing the farmer by the name of his farm rather than that of his family, he exclaimed; "Hoo's a' wi' ye the nicht, Borland? Man, I didna notice ye comin' up the road."

"I was sayin', James," rejoined the farmer, "that we're sair in need o' rain for the crops."

"Aye, Borland, the drouth's lasted just raither lang. I'll no deny but a drap o' rain wad hae gien a better show o' green amang the flooers, and some o' them micht hae been just a wee thocht lairger. But we get mair o' them, and I canna but think their colours is brichter in this sunny wather; and sometimes they're just smoored in leaf a'thegither whan the wather's bye ordinar wat."

"That's maybe a' vera true, James; but the corn's unco backward for want o' rain. I'm feared we'll no hae half a crop the year; and hoo we're tae pay oor rents oot o' that, I dinna see."

"That 'ill be a sair misfortune for ither folk, forby the fairmers, Borland. Dear bread maks hard times for us a', but spaicially for the puir."

"Ye're richt there, James; and I was thinkin' that, as Mr. Hamilton here's sae thick wi' the minister, and can tell him aboot thae things a hantle nicer

nor us fairmers, he micht gie the minister a bit hint tae put up a prayer for rain next Sawbath day."

"But, Borland, I'm geyan doobtfu' if there's muckle use o' prayin' for a change in the wather afore the change o' the mune."

"Ods, man, it's worth tryin'. It micht aye help a wee; and if it did nae gude, it wadna dae ony hairm."

"I'm thinkin', Borland, ye better just thole a wee while langer. And it's no vera lang ye'll hae tae wait: for I was lookin' at the almanac nae farther gane than yestreen, and I see the new mune comes in the morn's mornin' aboot three o'clock. I wadna be a bit surprised if ye get a pooerfu' onding o' rain afore the end o' the week."

"Man, James, it's no a big blatter o' rain that we want. It just rins doon aff oor hills intae the burn, withoot gaun intae the grund ava. I wad far raither see a fine saft shooer fa'in' canny and even for twenty-four hoors at least.

"I wad be geyan weel pleased tae see that mysel'. It wad freshen up everything in my ain wee bit plot."

"Man, James, I often wonner, whan I'm passin' [illegible] tae see ye taen up sae muckle wi' thae bits o' flooers, as if your vera life depended on them. I'm thinkin', if ye had twa hunner acres tae look efter

instead o' twa hunner feet, ye wadna hae time to fash yoursel' aboot sic whigmaleeries. I canna see there's ony use in them. Man, gin I had a wee bit gairden like yours, I wad raither see a gude raw o' fat cabbages than the bonniest flooers ye ever grew here."

"Aye, Borland, sae wad a coo."

"Weel, James," said the farmer, laughing heartily at the smith's retort, and taking it in the spirit by which it was mainly dictated, rather as a sturdy joke than as an insult, "a coo wad aye gie ye mulk for your trouble; and whan her mulkin' days is dune, she maks gude meat. But I ma an be steppin' hame. Sae I'll bid ye baith gude-e'en."

"Gude-e'en, Borland," s[illegible] the smith.

"Good evening," added the schoolmaster; "and I'll hope to see a change o' weather soon for the sake o' the crops."

"Thank ye, Mr. Hamilton; but if the rain doesna come this week, ye micht keep in mind what I said aboot the minister prayin' for't on Sawbath."

"All right, Borland," replied the schoolmaster; and then, when the farmer was out of hearing, he turned to the smith and said, "I see that Borland doesna take any great stock in your pansies."

"I dinna wonner at it. The growin' o' plants is

work wi' him, and it's just play wi' me. But it's a kin' o' play that I wadna like tae gie up. It doesna dae a body ony hairm, and I canna help thinkin' that it does me gude. Sometimes when I'm working amang my pansies in the simmer gloamin', and I see their bonny een turned up tae me, I feel amaist as if it was my ain bairns that were lookin' at me sae kind-like. But,"—and the honest mechanic checked himself as if he had allowed sentiment to carry him too far—"that 'minds me that it was ane o' my ain bairns—oor Geordie—I was wantin' tae speak tae ye aboot. Will ye no step in, and gie us a crack for a wee?"

"I would have been very well pleased to stop and enjoy a talk wi' you; but I promised to be at the manse by eight o'clock, and I don't like to keep the minister waiting."

"Weel," said the smith, "if ye dinna object, I'll tak' a walk doon tae the manse wi' ye; and we can talk aboot Geordie on the road. Just wait till I put on my coat."

And the smith, who had been cooling in the evening air the feverish heat of his over-worked arms, turned with a quick step into the cottage, and reappeared in few seconds dressed for the road. The subject on which he wanted the schoolmaster's advice

was his second son, George. The eldest son had been an apprentice with his father for a couple of years already, and the intention was that he should succeed to the business. But the father knew that the smithy could not afford decent comfort, such as he had enjoyed himself, to more than one, and therefore, when the destination of the second boy came to be decided, he was sorely puzzled. An opening in Arderholm was inconceivable, and there seemed, therefore, no alternative but that the boy should leave home.

This prospect, however, appeared in a very different light to the smith from that which would present to most fathers now. Even at the present day, indeed, there are remote rural districts where you may come upon people, especially the poor, who have never been farther from their own door than they could walk in a single day, and have never spent the night in a strange bed. But this class is becoming rarer every year. The difficulties and hardships of travel are rapidly disappearing under the beneficent applications of science. Men are generally becoming more accustomed to move about the world, to live at intervals away from home; and the removal of friends to a considerable distance does not involve the hopeless separation, the dismal out-

look for the affections, which it inevitably entailed two generations ago.

The honest smith was one of those old-fashioned people who found complete satisfaction in the uninterrupted industry of their trade, and the quiet affections of home. His ideas of life were limited within this narrow range; and the great world outside, to which he foresaw that he must commit his son, was peopled with all the terrors of a vast unknown. To the poor father, therefore, the thought of his boy wandering into the trackless region came at times like a hideous nightmare. He had put off the evil day as long as a practical decision was not required; but now Fate had appeared, as it comes at last to all, with the inexorable demand to defer the settlement no longer. The parish school had closed a few days before for the summer vacation. The smith's son had gone through all that the school was competent to teach, and it would simply be a waste of time to send him back after the holidays. He had shown a remarkable aptitude for Arithmetic, and the schoolmaster had given him some private instruction in Geometry and Algebra, which he seemed to take up as fast as his teacher could carry him on.

All this had been talked over by the schoolmaster and the smith on the way down through the village.

"I have thought about Geordie myself sometimes," said the schoolmaster, "especially since I found him taking so keenly to Mathematics; and, wi' his turn o' mind, I'm sure, if you got him into one of the big engineering works in Glasgow, he might make his mark as an engineer some day."

At this point the conversation was interrupted by the sp kers reaching the manse gate. Fortunately, the fine weather had tempted the minister out of doors, and he was strolling about his garden, enjoying his evening pipe, and turning aside now and then to do a little desultory gardening. He came forward at once on seeing his two parishioners.

"I'm glad to see you, James," said he, shaking the smith heartily by the hand. "I suppose you're out for a stroll this fine evening?"

"No just that, sir," replied th ..; "I only came doon the road wi' Mr. Ham..ton to ask his advice aboot oor Geordie. I'm sair puzzled what to do wi' him, noo he's dune wi' the school."

"A remarkably clever boy that, James," the minister struck in. "When I was examining the school last week, I put some common questions to him in Arithmetic, and he answered me as if it was

mere trifling to put such questions to *him*. So I tried him wi' two or three o' the hardest sums I could think o'. Man! he was ready wi' the answer before they were fairly out o' my mouth. I used to think I was pretty good at figures myself; but the fact is, I had to stop my questions, for I was afraid the boy was going to take me beyond my depth."

"Ho! ho!" said the smith, with a faint laugh to conceal his modesty and pride, "you're makin' ower muckle o' the laddie."

"Not a bit," said the schoolmaster; and then, turning to the minister, he added, "I've been giving him some lessons in Euclid and Algebra. It was no use keeping him wi' the rest o' the scholars at Arithmetic; I found he was away on by himself at Interest and Square Roots before any of them had got as far as Compound Addition. He's just wonderfully *glag at the uptak'*, as the saying is, in Mathematics; and I've been recommending his father to make an engineer o' him."

"Just the thing!" exclaimed the minister. "And I'll tell you what we'll do. You know my brother that comes down here sometimes for a few days in summer? Well, he's book-keeper to Stewart & Co. o' the Glenburn Engine Works in Glasgow; and, to tell you the truth, his salary's better than the stipend

o' this parish. Now, I'm sure he could get Geordie taken in as an apprentice. Besides, though my brother's no a bachelor like myself, he 'as no family; but he and his wife are just remarkably fond o' young folks, and I know they would look after the laddie, and see that he doesn't get into harm's way."

This warm sympathy of minister and schoolmaster began to pour its kindly influence over the sturdy smith. The fatherly heart in him was too deeply moved to let him speak without showing his emotion, and his undemonstrative Scotch nature made him shrink from such an exposure. But it did him good to talk, and to hear others talk, of a matter on which it had been a dread for him to think. It was no longer a dim horror, with which he dared not grapple, brooding over his spirit in the oppressive darkness of a fearful silence. He had grappled with it, and flung it out into the clear light of practical thought. He was like a man for whom the phantoms of a nightmare are vanishing before the realities of a cheerful dawn.

After a brief pause the minister continued—"But I think you had better come in wi' Mr. Hamilton and me, and we'll get time to talk the whole plan over."

"But, sir," objected the smith, "I thocht ye had

some business wi' Mr. Hamilton, and I would na like to interfere."

"Don't trouble yourself about that," rejoined the minister. "Our business can be settled in a very few minutes. Then we'll get a bit o' supper—I believe we're going to have a finnan haddie; and we can wash it down wi' a tumbler o' toddy."

CHAPTER III.

Minister and Schoolmaster.

"In arguing, too, the parson owned his skill;
For, e'en though vanquished, he could argue still."
—*The Deserted Village.*

In less than half-an-hour after entering the manse the minister and his two parishioners were seated round a hospitable table in his cosy dining-room. The fate of Geordie Forbes had been disposed of, as far as it could be controlled by human plans, and conversation took a new turn. Some reference had been made to Lord Westholme, when the smith, not without a certain brusque abruptness, broke in:

"By-the-bye, sir, ye had a visit frae his lordship yesterday. He stoppit at the smithy as he was passin' tae ask me tae look at ane o' his horse's shoon; and he said he was going on to the manse."

"Yes," said the minister, "he called here on his way down to the shore, where he's speaking o' building a pier, and feuing part o' the estate. He thinks

it will be a favourite watering-place. So, as he was on his way down to meet a surveyor and the factor, he just called at the manse to speak about a suggestion I had made to him to set up the old cross that's lying broken near the mill. It's the most interesting relic of antiquity in this part of the country, and I think it's a pity it should be left to be grown all over wi' dockens and nettles."

"I suppose," remarked the schoolmaster, "you've got his lordship over to your opinion, that the cross was put up by St. Patrick to drive away snakes?"

There was just enough in the tone of the schoolmaster to indicate a certain harshness of feeling, and a certain familiarity of manner in his intercourse with the minister, which may be scarcely intelligible to those who do not know the position of many of the old parish schoolmasters of Scotland. Not a few of these had gone through the whole, or the greater part, of the University course required for ordination in the Church, and had been forced to content themselves with the subordinate office mainly from want of influence with any of the patrons who had the right of presentation to pastoral charges. In point of education, therefore, the schoolmaster could often hold his own with the clergyman; and, though their difference in social rank was distinctly recognised,

it did not prevent them from enjoying, in many cases, the intercourse of friends rather than of superior and subordinate.

There was, therefore, nothing surprising in the familiar manner of Mr. Hamilton towards his pastor. The harshness of his tone, however, was the result of a feud of many years' standing between the two on a vexed question of local archæology. For both were amateur antiquaries, and almost the only material which the locality afforded for antiquarian zeal was a dilapidated cross, the fragments of which lay at the bend of Arderburn, near the mill. The two represented the antagonistic theories of local antiquarianism on the subject; and as there were absolutely no data for any probable solution of the problem, a free field was left open for interminable debate, of which the disputants took full advantage. The field was fought over and over again, always with the same indecisive result. Though the battle was often rendered perilous to the peace of the parish, when logical helplessness on both sides was relieved by rather startling explosions of temper, yet, as the combatants generally finished the fight with an amicable tumbler of toddy, their friendship was never seriously interrupted, and each was ready to renew the fray whenever a blow was struck by the

other. The scarcely concealed sneer of the schoolmaster, therefore, started the game afresh.

"Well," replied the minister, "I think at least his lordship would be very well pleased to see such a fine monument of ancient times restored; but as he's an Episcopalian himself, he's afraid the true-blue Presbyterians in the parish would suspect he was wanting to set up a Popish symbol, and some hot-headed zealots would just ding't down again."

"His lordship's quite right," rejoined the schoolmaster, with a certain exultation in his voice, "and I'm glad to see he has more sense than to believe in yon auld stanes or in St. Patrick either."

"His lordship never said that," interrupted the minister warmly. "On the contrary, he seemed quite favourably impressed with the history I gave him of the venerable antiquity."

"Ho! ho!" laughed the schoolmaster defiantly, "it's easy for any man to spin a history out o' his ain noddle."

"But you can't deny," the minister indignantly urged, "that St. Patrick's birthplace is not so very far away. You can't explain why the hill up there should have been called Patricklaw, if St. Patrick was never here. You know well enough that St. Patrick was famous for getting rid of serpents,

and it's as plain as a pikestaff that Arder is just a corruption of Adder, and the bonny holm we're livin' on was called Adder-holm, because it must have been infested wi' adders long ago, and St. Patrick just tried his 'prentice hand here before going over to Ireland to do his big job there."

"But what in the world has all that to do wi' the cross?" asked the schoolmaster.

"Why," replied the minister, "you know well enough it's been a common belief since the days o' Eden, that devils prefer serpents to all other animals when they take a bodily form, and that they're scared away by the sacred symbol of our Christian faith. It's clear St. Patrick put up the cross for that purpose."

"I don't believe," said the schoolmaster, "that St. Patrick had anything to do wi' the cross more than you or I."

"I dinna ken muckle about what you're arguing," broke in the smith, in whose mind the turn of the conversation had evidently caught up some half-broken thread of memory, "but I mind weel when I was a laddie at the schule, no a bairn in a' the pairish would daur to touch ane o' the stanes o' the auld cross; for, they said, if you touched them, an adder would spring out and poosion you."

This was an unexpected reinforcement for the minister. "Here now," he exclaimed with triumphant tone, "you see how even the superstitions of the place support my theory."

"Mair by token," continued the smith, "I mind my auld grannie—she had an awfu' wheen o' auld-world stories and sangs. Weel, she used to tell a gruesome story about Graham o' the Netherton lang syne He was a drucken, godless scoondrel; some said he was sib to Claverhoose. Weel, ae nicht when he was staggerin' hame roarin' fou,' he dang doon the auld cross, just out o' a spirit o' dounricht devilry. So, they say, when he got hame to his bed, St. Patrick appeared to him in a dream, and tell't him his soul would be required to answer for't that nicht week. And sure enough, on that very nicht he was drinkin' hard wi' a crony to drive awa' the thocht. But they were ower drunk to mak' their way hame. And it was an awfu' nicht o' storm and rain, and the burn was in a spate, and in the mornin' he was found lyin' wi' his heid in the Kelpie's Kirn, droon'd, though the haill o' his body was oot o' the watter, and his crony was lyin' beside him on the bank deid-drunk."

The lurid folklore of the smith attacked the schoolmaster at a point where he was wholly ...

prepared, and almost completely silenced the battery of his old arguments. He was able now to fire only one or two feeble shots, as he retired crestfallen from the battle.

"I must confess still," he urged in a greatly subdued tone, "it seems to me as clear as daylight, that Arder is just a corruption for Arthur. I'm sure we've often spoken about the traces o' King Arthur that you find all over the South o' Scotland, from Arthur's Seat on the East to Arthurlie on the West; and the romances about Arthur and his Knights often mention places in this part o' Britain. I've got Sir Walter Scott on my side, too; for you'll see that he refers to that fact in his learned Introduction to the Romance of Sir Tristrem."

"By the bye," replied the minister, who felt that after his triumph he could afford to be generous, "speaking about the romances of Arthur and his Knights reminds me that I got a new volume of poems from my brother when I was in Glasgow last week. He's a great reader of poetry, and he was just raving about this new poet. I never heard tell o' him before; but you'll find a poem in the book, that will maybe interest you, for it's about the death of Arthur. 'Morte d' Arthur,' I think, is the title." And then, as he saw his guests rising to go, the

minister added, "But you had better take an eke, just for a *deoch an' doruis*, before you start on the road; and I'll go and bring the book."

The little volume was brought, and, after a satisfied glance through its pages, was deposited by the schoolmaster in his coat pocket. The parting glass of toddy mellowed the three men into a genial warmth of kindly feeling and kindly language. In friendly talk they all walked out to the manse gate, where the minister bade his guests good-night; and as they had to go home by different roads, the smith was left to his own thoughts, while he wended his way up through the silent street.

Though it was but ten o'clock, the hour was late for the smith. Usually by that hour, from the habits of his industrious life, he was enjoying the enviable slumber that rewards honest toil; and therefore to be strolling homewards, when the whole village was hushed in the stillness of its early slumber, wrought on him with the power of an unwonted stimulant. The gentler side of his nature, which had been cherished by his quiet home-life, and by fondly tending the few simple flowers of his garden, rendered him by no means insensible to the mysterious beauty of the midsummer gloaming; and it came upon him with all the greater force, that it

was not a stale sight with which his eye had often been sated, but rather like a new vision breaking in upon him with the freshness of a glad surprise. Though the sun had long set, it was still only slanting below the northern horizon towards the east. The sky overhead had merely faded into a paler blue, and all above the fallen sun lingered a calm light of ruddy gold as if from an undying fire. But the sober glories of the darkening twilight became, for the feeling of the honest smith, transmuted into the brightening splendours of the dawn, painting with their cheerful radiance the hopes which were gathering around the future of his son.

CHAPTER IV.

George Forbes.

"He breaks his birth's invidious bar,
And grasps the skirts of happy chance,
And breasts the blows of circumstance,
And grapples with his evil star,
. . . . . .
And makes by force his merit known."

—*In Memoriam.*

Fifteen years have passed since the evening on which it had been decided to send George Forbes to Glasgow to learn engineering. It is now an evening in early Spring. The minister of Arderholm is seated by his study fire, meditatively puffing at long intervals a languid jet of tobacco smoke, while he gazes at the red glow in the grate as if he were looking at something far off in the future or in the past. On the opposite side of the fire-place sits his brother, bookkeeper to Stewart & Co. of the Glenburn Engine Works, who had been referred to in the conversation of fifteen years ago. The two brothers

were nearly of an age, and at their time of life it would have been difficult for a stranger to say which was the elder. For both were evidently about ten years beyond three score, and with their more earnest thoughts steeped in the familiar language of Scripture, they had both come to think of themselves as having reached the term of active human life The minister had just been telling his brother that he had made up his mind either to resign his charge or to apply to the Presbytery for an assistant and successor. After a few minutes' silent reflection on the part of both, the brother observed, "I've come to the same resolution myself. I've told the firm that I'd like to leave as soon as they can get a new bookkeeper."

"Why!" exclaimed the minister in some astonishment, "how's that? You're younger than me by two or three years. You're good for some years' work yet."

"Maybe," rejoined the brother, "but things are changed at the works since Mr. Stewart died, and I can see quite well that it'll no be so pleasant now for the older hands that were used to his ways."

"Oh! now I nnderstand," exclaimed the minister again, as if a new thought had struck him. "I suppose that explains why George Forbes has left the

works. His father told me yesterday; but he couldn't give me any explanation. So I didn't press the subject for fear there might be something wrong."

"There's nothing wrong with George," replied the brother. "The loss will be to the firm, and that they'll soon find out."

"I'm real glad to hear that," said the minister. "I took a deep interest in the lad, and I would have been distressed if anything had gone wrong with him after all."

"No fear o' him," was the rejoinder. "George is as true as gold. I took just an extraordinary interest in him myself. But the fact is, it was no great trouble to help a lad like him; for he helped himself better than anybody else could do."

"Well, I suppose," the minister chimed in with a sort of professional remark, "we should imitate the ways of Providence in dealing with others, and help them that help themselves."

"At any rate," the brother went on, "it was a real pleasure to see how George took advantage of any help you gave him. He hadn't been many days in the works till Mr. Stewart saw that he was worth a dozen ordinary 'prentices in any job that needed some gumption to do it well. So he was always sent

to the most important jobs, and wi' the best o' the journeymen; for they were as glad to get him as he was to go with them. In that way he had opportunities that very few get, for learning his trade thoroughly."

"But," the minister broke in again in an inquiring tone, "I understood that latterly George was taken in as a partner. It's hard to see how he rose so fast. He must surely have had an extraordinary run o' good luck?"

"Well, perhaps," replied the brother cautiously, "there may have been a bit of luck in it too, though the best o' luck won't be much help to a man that doesn't know how to help himself."

In this sort of desultory chat the whole story of George Forbes' rise gradually came out in little details which formed material for a pleasant talk between the two brothers at the time, but have lost nearly all their interest long ago. It seems that the quick intelligence of the young apprentice very soon led him to take an interest in the theory as well as the practice of his trade; and, thanks to the training which he had received from the schoolmaster of Arderholm in Geometry and Algebra, he was able to enter the evening classes of the Andersonian Institution in Mechanics and Physics and Chemistry.

When he finished his apprenticeship, it would probably have been difficult to find in the workshops of Glasgow a more competent journeyman. He had not been a journeyman many months when his employer was thrown into sore perplexity one Monday morning. There was a big job on hand. One of the largest engines ever made in his works was to be put up in a new factory. The men were all ready to start for the job; but the foreman that was to take charge—one of the best mechanics in Glasgow if he had only kept steady—had gone off on a spree on Saturday night and nobody could tell when he would turn up at his work again. The job had to be finished that week, and Mr. Stewart was at his wits' end what to do. He knew young Forbes' intelligence and skill, but naturally felt a good deal of diffidence about his youth. Still, there was no other man that could be thought of, and he was sent out in charge of the work. The young fellow was put upon his mettle, and did his very best, with a result that dissipated all the fears, and surpassed all the hopes, of his employer. This, of course, was the making of him. After that, he was employed all the time as a foreman.

It was soon clear that the work done by the new foreman was bringing new business to the Glenburn

Engine Works. In fact, as Mr, Stewart latterly became the sole proprietor, the business was getting far beyond what he could look after himself; and he saw well enough that he could not afford to lose the services of George Forbes. He was a just and kindly man; and, as his own health was beginning to fail, he did what was both wise and fair—he gave Forbes a small share in the business. It was a most successful move of Mr. Stewart himself. It did not take one pound off his own profits, and it made his junior partner as attached to him as a son.

"Well," remarked the minister, "that makes it all the more difficult to understand why he should be leaving the business now."

"It's not so hard to understand when you know the facts," replied the brother. "When Mr. Stewart died, six months ago, of course George hadn't the capital to carry on such a big concern; and, after long inquiry, the trustees could do nothing but sell it. The man that has bought it is going to put his sons into it; and, of course, as he didn't know, or didn't believe, how valuable George would be to the business, he determined to buy him out. Whenever I heard of this intention, I gave George a hint to stand up for his rights. He had the whip-hand over the new man; for he wasn't anxious to

sell—it was the other man that was anxious to buy. So it was settled at last by George getting £12,000. It's a snug little sum for a young man not much over thirty, but it's no more than his share was worth."

"Twelve thousand pounds!" ejaculated the minister, with a slight panting jerk in his voice, as if the announcement had taken away his breath. With a Scotch country parson's modest ideas of wealth, he was dumbfoundered by the thought of such an accumulation in the course of a few years. It took him, therefore, a minute or two to recover from his astonishment. He then resumed, "I wonder what George is going to do now."

"Oh!" said the brother, "he's here just now. I believe he's got some plan in his noddle to buy up the old mill, and turn it into a factory. I wouldn't be surprised if he was to drop in to-night, for he knows I'm here; and, in fact, I told him I was sure you would like to see him if he got through his business in time."

The two old men then returned to the discussion of their own plans for the future. The book-keeper was talking of a cottage which was for sale at Inverarder, and which he had some thought of buying as a pleasant home for his old age, when the door

opened, and George Forbes was ushered in. He brought with him a friend who, it appeared afterwards, was to be associated with him in his new enterprise.

The minister had seen little of young Forbes for the last few years, and had had no opportunity of knowing the full extent of his success. His greeting, therefore, was unusually hearty; and under the mellowing warmth of their re-union the thin crust of stiffness formed by long separation thawed almost at once. In a few minutes the two began to open their hearts to one another, and were revealing with trustful candour their several plans for the future.

"I'm real glad," remarked the minister, "that you're coming back to the old parish. It'll be a great pleasure to your father. He's proud of you, George; and he has good reason."

"Well," replied Forbes, "I daresay it was as much for his sake and mother's as for anything else, that I thought of trying my luck here. But the fact is, the situation is very good for a factory. You see, the railway and the pier at Inverarder have made a complete change in this part o' the country."

"And you've really bought the old mill?" inquired the minister.

"Well, it's practically settled," was the reply. "I

.et his lordship's factor this afternoon. For a while he kept on asking a perfectly ridiculous price—maybe because he's accustomed to a good deal of argle-bargling wi' the farmers. But I couldna be bothered doing business in that sort o' way. So I just told him at last that I knew quite well how matters stood. The property's been in the market—I don't know how long—for years at least; and not an offer for it. What's more—nobody's going to carry on a grist-mill here now. It was all very well when the tenants were under *thirlage* to the mill, or even when they had no other place to send their grain to. But it's a totally different thing when they've got a railway and steamers at their very door, to send their grain to any market where they'll get the biggest price. So I offered to pay a good price for the land, and he'll just have to let the mill go for an auld sang, as the saying is. He said he would have to see his lordship before he took my offer. But I could see that was a mere form. We may make up our minds that the bargain's made."

And so the talk went on with cheerful interest on both sides, till the minister, suddenly bethinking himself, remarked, "But it's near time for supper. You and your friend will just stop and take a bite wi' us."

"I'm sorry I can't," replied Forbes. "Mother told me she was going to have some minced collops and poached eggs for our supper, and she would be terribly disappointed if we didna turn up. But I can take on me to invite you and your brother to join us. Mother and father would be unco proud if you would come. I promised we would be back by nine, and I see we have just time to walk up."

There was not much hesitation on the part of the two elderly gentlemen, and in a few minutes they were on the road with their younger companions to the old smith's cottage. The smith and his wife had already had their spirits raised by the visit of their son with his friend, and all the resources of the homely cottage had been called into requisition to produce a supper worthy of the occasion. The exhilaration of the old couple received an additional zest from the unexpected appearance of the minister and his brother on the scene. The supper party was therefore in a peculiarly happy mood, and much was said about the project of the two young men. But even they could scarcely have ventured to anticipate the completeness of the revolution they were to bring about. With their advent the old Arderholm —the antique rural village with its peaceful, idyllic life—vanished among the memories of a bygone

civilisation. In its place came a new Arderholm, with all the stir and stress of modern industrial aspirations.

CHAPTER V.

Mary Freer.

"She was a phantom of delight
When first she gleamed upon my sight;
A lovely apparition, sent
To be a moment's ornament.

"I saw her, upon nearer view,
A spirit, yet a woman too!
A countenance in which did meet
Sweet records, promises as sweet."

—*Wordsworth.*

The new industry, started in the old mill of Arderholm, was carried on in exceptionally favourable conditions. The initial outlay of capital had been small, the working expenses were checked with intelligent economy, and the market happened to be unusually remunerative; so that, after a year's experience, it was found advisable to make a large addition to the old building. The machinery for this new part had been constructed by William Fraser, an engineer with whom George Forbes had

formed acquaintance in Glasgow. During the summer, while the machinery was being installed, Mr. Fraser had taken one of the pleasant villas at Inverarder for his family; and he was in the habit of coming down there every afternoon from Glasgow, and returning to business in the city every morning. He was consequently often at Arderholm to see how the work in the new factory was getting on, and occasionally Forbes walked down with him to Inverarder, when he was sometimes induced to wait for a chat over supper. Latterly these visits had become more frequent. To Mr. Fraser they indicated nothing beyond a desire for a little society on the part of his friend to relieve the monotonous solitude of bachelor life in a village; but the quicker intuitions of his wife led to a different surmise, though she kept it, like a prudent woman, in her own heart. One evening, however, Forbes not only appeared somewhat unexpectedly, but evinced a restlessness which showed a strange contrast with his usual business-like calm. The consequence was, that neither of the two men seemed readily to adapt himself to the other's mood. Their conversation, somehow, would not run with its usual friendly flow; and, after sitting less than half-an-hour, Forbes made some obviously artificial apology, then rose

with an awkward abruptness, and bade his friends good-night.

"I wonder what can be the matter with Forbes to-night," said Mr. Fraser, as he returned to the parlour after escorting his visitor to the gate. "He didn't seem like himself at all. I hope he isn't making himself ill with overwork."

Mrs. Fraser, who had risen to bid Forbes good-night, and had not yet resumed her seat, went up to her husband as he was speaking, laid her hand upon his shoulder, and, gazing into his eyes with a look such as only years of happy love can form, said: "O you little goose! as if you had never been sheepish like that in all your life! Don't you see that the poor fellow was just driven to distraction wi' disappointment? Mary's out to-night!"

"Whui!" whistled Mr. Fraser, while fun played all about his mouth and eyes. Then, drawing his wife to him, and kissing her with a deeper, if less passionate, fervour than that of earlier love, he retorted, "Come, come, wee wifie, you're ower young to begin match-making yet. Just wait till you're a grannie before you take up wi' that old ladies' amusement."

"It's all very well," replied Mrs. Fraser, assuming an air of offended innocence at her husband's insinu-

ation, "to pretend that I'm trying to make a match. I'm sure the idea has scarcely ever entered my head; but I could not help wondering what was bringing Mr. Forbes down here so often, when it was plain he had no particular business to see you about. And I'm sure I don't want to see Mary married till a man turns up that's fit for her; and I would like to see the man that's fit for Mary Freer!" This was exclaimed with the enthusiastic tone of generous friendship; and then, as if returning to a calmer reflection, Mrs Fraser added, "Though, if she's going to marry, she might do worse."

"Well, yes, you're right," said her husband meditatively, "Forbes is a good fellow, a first-rate business man, steady and honest. In fact, he has no bad habits that I ever heard of."

To explain this conversation, it must be observed that the Mary Freer, to whom Mrs. Fraser referred, was a friend who was spending the summer with her at Inverarder. She must have been at the time some two or three years over twenty—had, in fact, just passed from the immature bloom of girlhood into the riper grace of young womanhood. The singularly clear complexion of her face showed in striking relief against her rich dark hair, whose heavy masses gave a certain nobility to her head, in what-

ever way they were worn. Her bright colour, indeed, suggested an affinity with the fair-skinned races of the North, while her hair seemed rather to record a descent from the darker races of the South. In a dim, though not improbable, tradition of her family, the Freers had come of an old Huguenot stock—refugees whom French misgovernment had driven from their homes to enrich the material as well as the spiritual life of Britain. There was often to be caught in her expression a softened melancholy, with an occasional hint of unbending firmness in the play of her delicate lips, in which an ethnologist's fancy might not unnaturally trace a survival of the severe strength of Huguenot character. But, whatever may have been the proportion of this sterner element in her nature, it had evidently been mellowed by a dash of ingredients from many another source. Often her eye was lit up with the merry twinkle that is born only of genuine and genial humour, and her laugh had that clear tone that is rung out only by an explosion of whole-souled mirth.

Mrs. Fraser's surmise with regard to Mr. Forbes proved to be correct. It was his first and only love. It took himself, therefore, completely by surprise. During the next few days the tide of unwonted excitement was evidently rising to its flood, and it

began to beat violently against the embankments which had been built up to restrain the passions of nature by the modesty and prudence of his singularly regular life. Now and then, therefore, it ran over in little rills, or rather, it was jerked out in odd spurts, of speech and manner, which, Mr. Fraser had to acknowledge at last, were unmistakable. About a week after the evening on which the subject had been broached by Mrs. Fraser, she and her husband were alone again when Mr. Forbes called; and in the course of conversation, perhaps led on by Mrs. Fraser, he made a remark about Miss Freer, which betrayed him completely, and forced him to an explanation. The embankments of self-control gave way all along the line. There was something to touch the womanly sympathy of Mrs. Fraser in the look of the strong, severely regular man of business, while the rapid fluctuations of colour on his face told the helplessness of his emotional excitement. Her husband, taking advantage of the fact that he was ignored, slipped out of the room, lit a sedative cigar, and strolled down to the beach. He knew that the patient, whom he had left with his wife, was far safer in her hands than if he was to interfere. And he judged rightly. Not much was said by Mrs. Fraser. She told the story of Mary Freer's life:

how she had lost her father when she was still a child; how her two only brothers were gone too; how one of them had fallen a victim to the climate in India; how the other had rushed into a short "fierce blaze of riot," in which his life burnt rapidly out; how her mother, broken-hearted by these trials, had died a few months before, and [illegible]er absolutely alone in the world.

The instructive tact of Mrs. Fraser in avoiding any direct discussion of the practical problem of Mr. Forbes' situation, and giving a quiet narrative of Mary Freer's life, exercised a soothing effect upon his mind; and he therefore felt wonderfully calmed when she finished: "And now, Mr. Forbes, I have told you really all I can say about Miss Freer. But you will just have to try your fortune with her yourself. There's no use of anybody interfering in such affairs, at least when you have to do with a girl of so much spirit and independence. But you'll come down again to-morrow evening after tea, and I'll arrange that you'll see Mary by herself. Of course, I can't tell you how she may feel. But don't be downhearted; faint heart never won fair lady."

"I don't know how to thank you, Mrs. Fraser," was the reply. "You've lifted a terrible load off my mind." And then, after a moment's pause, he added,

"I think I'll bid you good-night before she comes home. I feel as if I would rather not face her just now."

"Well," said Mrs. Fraser, with her young motherly smile, "perhaps it would be better for you both; so I'll not press you to stay. But," she added with good-humoured banter, "don't forget now about to-morrow evening, and go off on some business engagement to Glasgow."

Next evening Forbes came down to Inverarder, according to agreement. As usual, he asked for Mr. Fraser, and was for the moment perplexed on learning that he and Mrs. Fraser had gone out. "But," the maid added, "Miss Freer is in; and Mrs. Fraser bade me say to any callers that she would be back in an hour." Accordingly he was shown into the parlour, where Miss Freer was seated at the piano, apparently so absorbed in her music that she was not aware of his arrival till the maid had closed the door and left the two together—alone in a room for the first time.

About an hour afterwards, Mr. and Mrs. Fraser returned. As they entered the parlour, Miss Freer was again seated at the piano, trying to wear the appearance of having been there for some time. But the honesty of her nature was too strong for her

self-control ; and, when her eye met Mrs. Fraser's, it blabbed the whole secret. The result led to a somewhat more vehement effervescence of feeling than is common among an undemonstrative people like the Scotch ; and Mr. Fraser, who on the previous evening had displayed a fair share of the national aversion to anything like a parade of sentiment, escaped from the scene when it became too exciting, and returned in a few minutes with a bottle of champagne in his hand. "I hope supper's ready," he remarked, "I'm rather hungry after our walk. And we must drink the health of the young couple in the best wine I've got."

CHAPTER VI.

The Burnside Household.

"O' a' roads to happiness ever were tried,
There's nane half sae sure as ane's ain fireside."

—*E. Hamilton.*

The courtship of George Forbes and Mary Freer soon became an old story, the incidents of which were forgotten by all except the two whom they specially interested. The first two or three years of their married life were spent in the old Miller's house which had been improved for their use by a few modern conveniences. But it had at last to be cleared away in order to make room for the extension of the factory; and a more commodious residence was then built in the immediate neighbourhood on a spot commanding a magnificent view down the little strath of Arderburn, out upon a wide stretch of sea with the hazy outline of Cantyre and of the peaks of the Western Islands fading into cloudland on the

distant horizon. The site is one of th slopes rising from the burn, and the house therefore came to be known by the name of Burnside.

In a few years the house was enlivened by the noisy sports of two healthy boys, who formed Mrs. Forbes' whole family. The elder had been named, in accordance with ancient custom, after his father's father, James Forbes, th former smith of Arderholm. The same custom would have given the second boy the name of his mother's father, William Freer: but the mother herself, feeling that her father was no longer to be gratified by a little namesake, wished the boy rather to bear her husband's name. So a compromise was made by joining the two names, and the boy became William George.

The early education of the two boys had been conducted mainly at home. The objections to the parish school might have been set aside by the father, but were too strongly felt by the mother to be overcome in her mind. Accordingly, Mrs. Forbes herself began the education of her sons, and had taught them to read simple stories, when she sought the assistance of a teacher to carry on her work. For various reasons she had decided to get a governess rather than a male tutor, and after some inquiry had secured the services of a young lady named

Annie Henderson. The result turned out to be in every way satisfactory to all concerned.

Miss Henderson was the daughter of a Glasgow merchant who had been extremely fortunate for many years. Entering a large warehouse as a message boy before he was in his teens, he had rapidly risen to a position in which he was able to save from his salary a small capital, while he was still a young man. This enabled him to start business on his own account with many valuable connections formed during the course of his previous experience. The unremitting labour, to which he had thus been subjected from boyhood, began to show its effects in a marked deterioration of his health while he was yet in the years of his prime; and before he reached fifty he fell a victim to an epidemic fever. As his family grew up he had been drawn into an expensive style of living, which told upon the value of his assets when they came to be realised at the time of his death.

Fortunately, however, a good deal of his expenditure upon his family had been for their education; and towards his eldest daughter, Annie, he had been peculiarly liberal in this respect. In those days, indeed, it was not yet the fashion to give girls the more methodical training of our high schools, and

nobody but an advanced radical or two had even proposed that they should be admitted to universities. But such culture as the best girls' schools of the time could give, Annie Henderson had enjoyed. Accordingly, when it became known to her, after her father's death, that the family would be forced to reduce their style of living, and might even find it hard to obtain the means of a very reduced style, she at once proposed to her mother that she should make use of her education to secure a position as governess.

It was a happy circumstance, that she was directed to a household where the feelings of her past life were never rudely shocked by any vulgar effort to make her realise that she was in a dependent position. If such an idea had ever been suggested, the spirit of honest industry in Mr. Forbes' mind would probably have led him to assert, perhaps with some generous indignation, that a lady, who earns her living by her own labour, is more independent than one who lives upon the industry of others. It did not therefore take long for Miss Henderson and her employers to throw off the thin veil of strangeness, which keeps even sympathetic minds from becoming familiarly acquainted for a while. Generous dispositions soon come to an understanding; and before many weeks

had passed, Miss Henderson had entered into a relation with Mrs. Forbes, which most visitors at Burnside would have been led to interpret as that of an elder daughter or a younger sister, rather than that of a paid governess. Her time was but partially occupied with teaching; and she soon became so valuable in many other ways—by her music and conversation in the evenings, her entertainment of visitors, her tasteful arrangement and decoration of rooms, and her willing as well as intelligent attention to many other household details—that her departure would have been felt as a very serious loss both by Mrs. Forbes and her husband.

Half-a-dozen years have gone by since Annie Henderson entered Burnside. The elder of her two pupils has spent two winters in Glasgow, studying branches of science connected with the work of his father's factory, while during the summer he obtained some practical knowledge of the work, with the view of ultimately taking his father's place. But his younger brother had been destined somewhat indefinitely for one of the learned professions, his mother's more definite wish being that he should enter the Church. It was, therefore, necessary to provide the requisite classical training for admission to the University; and not unnaturally it was his

teacher who pressed this necessity upon the family at Burnside. Midsummer had arrived, and lessons had just been suspended for the vacation. It is a beautiful evening, and the family are all in the parlour. Though their meal is over, they are still seated at the tea-table, enjoying a social chat, while a faint odour of a breeze from the sea, along with the rays of the evening sun, streams in at the western window of the room.

"What is Willie to do after the vacation?" Miss Henderson asked.

"Why!" exclaimed Mr. Forbes, with a tone and look of surprise, "What's up? You're never going to leave us, surely—are you, Annie?"

"It's not a question about me, Mr. Forbes. If I had only myself to consider, I would like to stay here as long as you can put up wi' me."

"Well, then," interrupted Mr. Forbes, with a very friendly gleam over his face, "that'll be a good long while."

"But," continued Miss Henderson, "it's Willie you have to consider, not me. It's time he was getting some more advanced teaching than I can give him."

"Hoot, toot," exclaimed Mr. Forbes in a tone of good-humoured fun, intended to veil his sincere

admiration for Miss Henderson's intelligence and attainments, "if Willie learns all that you can teach him, it'll take him some years to come yet."

"That's too bad of you, Mr. Forbes," retorted Miss Henderson, "to make fun o' my poor education in that way. You see I just got a girl's schooling. But Willie wants to be a minister, I believe; and he'll have to learn Latin and Greek and Mathematics and a whole lot o' things that I don't know anything about, before he goes to College."

"Well," Mrs. Forbes broke in, as she rose from the table and went over beside Miss Henderson, "there are still some things—music and German and others—that we need you to teach Willie. And at any rate," she added, as she slipped her arm round Miss Henderson, and drew her gently towards the window, while her voice fell to a low, mellow tone, "I hope, Annie, whatever's to be done wi' Willie, that you'll no leave *me*. I just don't see how I could ever get on without you now. Don't speak o' going away, dear."

The word "dear," introduced in this way, was something unusual in the undemonstrative language of Mrs. Forbes; and, coming thus unexpectedly, it expressed infinitely more than the most impassioned phrases from people of a more excitable tempera-

ment. Annie could answer only by a look of her eyes which glistened with happy gratitude for all the kindness she had enjoyed during her stay at Burnside. Nor was there time for further conversation, for just at this point a gentleman entered, with whom we must now become acquainted. But he is of sufficient importance to be reserved for a separate chapter.

CHAPTER VII.

The Manager.

"Perplexed in faith, but pure in deeds,
At last he beat his music out."
—*In Memoriam.*

The newcomer, who interrupted the conversation recorded at the close of last chapter, was known by name as James Nicoll, by occupation as manager of the Arderholm Mill. The work of management had been done for some years by Mr. Forbes' original partner, the young man who had joined with him in starting the enterprise; but for some reason, which it is not worth while to record, the partnership had been dissolved. Perhaps it was his experience of difficulties connected with a divided command, perhaps it was only the instinct of a strong intelligence and will, that led Mr. Forbes to resolve upon remaining sole proprietor of the factory. He therefore continued machinist, as well as financier and general head of the concern. But he knew the

value of effective management to keep in harmonious working all the operations of an extensive industry such as his was growing to be; and he sought, by careful inquiry as well as by the offer of a liberal salary, to secure the most competent manager he could find.

Good luck had led him to James Nicoll, and an intelligent insight into character had enabled him to discern Nicoll's worth. Young as he was—not over twenty-five—Nicoll had formed some peculiar qualifications for the position to which he was invited by Mr. Forbes. Originally intended for the ministry, he had not only enjoyed a good high school education, but had nearly finished his course in Arts at the University of Glasgow, when the death of his father, leaving but an imperfect provision for his family, rendered it impossible for him to continue his professional studies. Moreover, intellectual difficulties had been gradually raising a formidable barrier against his hearty acceptance of the Church's creed; and, wisely deciding to say little about these, he made the necessity of doing something for a livelihood the ostensible reason for the change in his occupation. He therefore applied for, and obtained, a situation in a mill owned by one of his father's old friends.

Nicoll had been an earnest student, with scientific enthusiasm and scientific thoroughness in his intellectual work. The same enthusiasm and thoroughness were at once applied to his new employment. He thus soon acquired a mastery, not only of the comparatively petty occupation assigned to him at first, but even of the general principles and all the main details of the manufacture in which he was employed. One evening, after he had been about half a year in the mill, he had occasion to call at the house of his employer, his father's old friend. The old gentleman was alone, and insisted on Nicoll waiting to take supper with him—a Welsh rabbit washed down with a tumbler of toddy. An opportunity was thus given for a conversation such as the two had never enjoyed since they had formed the relation of employer and employee. Naturally, the young man's mind was full of the new occupation which he had been learning during the previous few months. It had been to him a new study, with the added interest of being extremely different from that he had grappled with before. The [illegible] who had learnt his business by rule of thumb had never dreamt of its being invested with intellectual charm, was gradually led on [illegible] as he heard its materials and processes de-

the light of scientific thought. At last as his kindly feelings for the son of his old friend gathered warmth from the mellowing supper, he could contain himself no longer, and exclaimed—

"Man! Jamie, when you came to the mill at first, I thought you were over-educated, and that a college bred lad like you would never take to business. But, gosh! I believe you ken a guid deal more about our manufacture than I do myself. How long is't since you came to the mill?"

"About six months."

"Gosh! I've been nearly sixty years at it, and it was only a few moments' reflection as I must see the manager the morning, and aim to put you to some more profitable work than you're at."

"I hope you don't think I'm dissatisfied," said the young man; "for I'm very much obliged to you for giving me a chance at all, where I can learn the business."

"Oh!" replied the employer, "I was na thinkin' o' that. I only meant it was no use wasting a clever chiel like you on work that could be done by ony lump o' a boy. Now," he added as Nicoll rose to go, "will you no take an *ekse*?"

"No, thanks," was the reply.

"Weel, Jamie," observed his host in a kindly

tone, as he glanced at the tumbler which the young man was leaving scarcely half-finished, "I'm glad to see that's ae rock you're no likely to split on. That's what ruins lots o' our finest young men."

It was fou. or five years after this, when Nicoll received and accepted Mr. Forbes' offer to assume the management of the Arderholm factory. On the evening on which he has been introduced to us, he had been but a few months in his new situation. Retaining the habits of his student days, he spent his evenings for the most part in his lodging, which was a room in the house of the schoolmaster. He had not therefore been a frequent, though he was always a welcome, visitor at Burnside; and this evening an animated conversation sprang up at once on his entrance, and made him almost forget the immediate object of liis visit. He had recently, for recreation and fresh sea air, bought a small yacht, which he kept at Inverarder; and Mr. and Mrs. Forbes had promised to go with him some evening to enjoy a sail. This evening it happened that both had other engagements; but, not to disappoint Mr. Nicoll, Mrs. Forbes proposed that Miss Henderson should go instead of her.

"Of course," was Mr. Nicoll's reply, "I shall be extremely flattered if Miss Henderson will come and

try my little craft; but I'm sure she won't be displeased if I say at the same time that I'm very much disappointed that you can't come too, Mrs. Forbes."

"Come, come now, Mr. Nicoll," was the reply, "that's a very pretty compliment. But you're not going to make me believe that you want an old wife like me wi' you, when you've got a young lady like ——."

Here Miss Henderson turned suddenly round, and laughingly put her hand on Mrs. Forbes' mouth to stop what was evidently coming, and then, in a low tone of mock threat, she said, "Now, if you say that, I'll pay you back by contrasting a plain old maid like me with a handsome woman ——."

"Go away wi' you, you naughty girl," interrupted Mrs. Forbes; "and see you behave yourself when my back's turned."

"What's this you two ladies are quarrelling about over there?" Mr. Forbes called out. "Here's the dog-cart waiting for me at the gate. I wasn't going to Inverarder; but it will take me very little out o' my way to drive down there and round by the shore road. So I think Miss Henderson and Mr. Nicoll had better come wi' me, and they'll have more time for their sail."

In a few minutes the three were in the dog-cart,

and in a few minutes more Mr. Forbes had left the two young people on the beach at Inverarder.

Mr. Nicoll's yacht was simply an open sail boat, not too large to be managed conveniently by himself. The attention, however, which it required, not only at starting but for some time afterwards, while the breeze was fresh, prevented any continuous conversation with his companion. But the evening was fine, and the breeze began to moderate as the sun went down. The first half-hour carried the boat two or three miles up the coast; but, on observing that the wind was falling, Mr. Nicoll thought it prudent to tack about. The gentle breeze now gave such an easy motion to the boat that it required almost no attention—no attention to interfere with the freedom of conversation; and thus an opportunity was afforded for the two to become acquainted as they had never been before.

They had met, of course, frequently already; and had even, on more than one occasion, been left to converse with each other alone. But neither was of a disposition to form friendships hastily, or to indulge in the vulgar frivolity of opening a semi-amorous parley with every chance acquaintance of the other sex. In external appearance also, it must be confessed—to make our narrative perfectly truth-

ful—neither possessed the features calculated to excite the rather questionable affection known as "love at first sight." To a student of physiognomy, indeed, both faces might have appeared remarkable, but remarkable as expressing strength of formed character rather than gentleness of native disposition. Mr. Nicoll's face would have been, by connoisseurs, unhesitatingly described as indicating an unusually high development in the region of intellect and morality. His profile showed an almost perpendicular elevation from chin to brow, with a scarcely perceptible projection of thin lips, but a large and slightly curved projection of nose. Miss Henderson had scarcely a touch of the more voluptuous beauty of colour with which the common eye is most readily, if not entirely, attracted; but for those who have an eye to catch the more spiritual beauty of form and motion, there was much that was peculiarly winsome in her appearance. Her handsome figure, the fine grace which characterised her movements combined, with truly artistic effects in dress, to produce an impression which compensated in a large measure for the disappointment of her complexion.

And now the two are sitting together on the stern seat of a small yacht, under all the weird influences of the mellow twilight of the long mid-

summer evening, heightened by the invigorating sea breeze and the excitement of a pleasing motion. There is a strange sense of isolation from the big world, of being shut up in a very little world of your own, when you are out on the waters in a small boat, especially after sundown, when objects on shore begin to disappear, or to be but faintly suggested by vague and dim forms. Whether the two occupants of the yacht were drawn closer to each other than was absolutely necessary by the requirements of their small craft, it would be unfair to inquire; but two people cannot sit far apart in such a situation, and contagion may originate a mental as well as a physical infection. Mr. Nicoll and his companion, moreover, were soon brought spiritually closer to each other by a bond of sympathy which was discovered in the course of their conversation—that community in their external fates which had obliged them both unexpectedly to work for their own support. Whenever this chord of sympathy was struck, it naturally drew out a freer and fuller communication of thought and feeling than either was accustomed to indulge in every day. In this kindly communion of spirit with spirit, the external world seemed to be for the time obliterated. The minutes flew by with unobserved rapidity, and it was scarcely a welcome surprise when

they found themselves alongside the pier at Inverarder, though their watches proved that it had taken more than an hour to return the distance they had gone in half that time.

Previous to this evening, Mr. Nicoll had formed a very high admiration for Miss Henderson. Her whole character was calculated to charm a man of vigorous intelligence and comparatively calm temperament. In the recent dreams with which many an idle moment of his lonely evening hours were whiled away, he had often pictured a home for himself, with Miss Henderson as his wife. She was in fact the only woman for whom such a fancy picture had ever taken distinct shape in his mind; but with the caution, which is a proverbial characteristic of his countrymen, and which is peculiarly developed by a temperament like his, he had resolved to avoid, if possible, the pain which would be given to her as well as to himself by the necessity of an explicit refusal. He had therefore been looking for an opportunity of reconnoitring the situation, so as to ascertain the prospect of victory or defeat before making any distinct advance. Such an opportunity seemed to have been furnished by the unexpectedly genial intimacy of the conversation in the yacht. Accord-

ingly, on the walk up to Arderholm the crisis was reached.

During the first few minutes, the two walked on in silence through the crowd of leisurely loiterers who were strolling in the neighbourhood of the pier. But when they left the shore road, and began to ascend the lonely strath of Arderburn, Miss Henderson, beginning to feel the heat of the exertion, pulled off her gloves; and her companion, observing the action, said, "I think you had better take my arm up the hill." Then, taking her hand, he drew her arm through his. The touch of her warm, soft, ungloved hand thrilled him like a lover's first kiss. The thrill overmastered even his comparatively placid temperament; and as the surge of emotion was not checked by her hand being withdrawn from his, it burst out in words which it would be useless to reproduce exactly here, as all their force was derived from the tone and the influences of the situation in which they were spoken. At first Miss Henderson seemed to be stunned, as by a sudden blow. Her clear intelligence, brightened by the earnest realities of her life, had led her to form a very modest estimate of her external appearance, and to abandon almost entirely the hope of those transient gallantries which enter largely into the mental excite-

ments of most young women. Now, at last, the unexpected improbability had become a fact; and she found herself wooed by a man whom no one could fail to respect—wooed just like other girls who win the admiration of men by their attractive looks. The situation simply took her by surprise. She had no words to express it—scarcely any thoughts about it to be expressed. She remained, therefore, silent. But her silence continued so long, that her lover became alarmed about the effect of his words.

"I am afraid, Miss Henderson," he said, "I have displeased you by——"

"Oh! no, no, Mr. Nicoll," she broke out in reply. "That's not what I meant by my silence. Perhaps you can't understand what I feel. I'm not like pretty girls that are always hearing compliments about their beauty, and get accustomed to that sort of thing. I've never been used to it, and I don't know what to say."

Her companion was probably in the same predicament of not knowing what to say; and he blurted out rather awkwardly, "I knew, of course, that you were above the petty vanity that's so common among ——"

"Oh!" she protested again, "I didn't mean that. I daresay I'm just as vain as other people in some

things. But I know well enough what a plain-looking girl I am; and in my circumstances it's better for me that I'm not tempted to expect anything from good looks."

Affected perhaps by her tone as much as by her words, Mr. Nicoll replied, "I fear I have given you pain by forcing you to say what you have said about yourself. But I'm sure that nobody would ever speak, or even think, about your looks as you've done. At any rate," he added after a pause, "I have learnt that there is something in you to love better even than your good looks. Won't you let me know you and love you better still?—Annie, will you be my wife?"

CHAPTER VIII.

Teacher and Pupil.

"This one thing I impress upon pupils, that they should love their teachers not less than their studies, and trust them as parents, not indeed of their bodies, but of their minds."—*Quintilian*

The marriage of Annie Henderson necessitated the new arrangement, which on other grounds she had recommended, for the education of her pupil. An appeal was made to the headmaster of the parish school, and, as he had no other pupils preparing for the university, he agreed to give private lessons to William Forbes after school hours.

The schoolmaster now is no longer our old friend, Robert Hamilton, who was wont to disturb the peace of the manse at times by his scepticism in regard to the antiquity of the dilapidated cross near the mill. That old bone of contention had long been buried; the fragments of the cross had in fact vanished, like some other ancient landmarks, under the numerous alterations rendered necessary by the

manufacturing enterprise of Mr. Hamilton's former pupil, George Forbes. The new schoolmaster, Allan MacVicar, was drawn from the same class of men as his predecessor, though with increased facilities for travel he had seen more of the world, and his culture was broadened by the advancing liberalism of later thought. Born of poor parents, he had struggled through numerous hardships, to obtain an University education with the view of qualifying himself for the Church. He had supported himself mainly by teaching, so that he had acquired some experience and reputation as a teacher. He had thus reached his second year in the Divinity Hall, when he was offered the parish school of Arderholm. His funds were low at the time, and he saw no prospect of being able to complete his studies immediately. He thought it therefore advisable to accept the position offered, even if it obliged him to interrupt his course for a year or two, as he knew that, with his habitual thrift, he could save enough from his salary to cover the moderate expenses of the remaining two years of his theological curriculum.

Unfortunately, however, for his professional ambition, he had formed an attachment to a young lady, also a teacher, and a teacher of considerable culture. The ardent young hearts had begun to feel as if it

were an interminable pilgrimage they had to travel before they could reach their earthly paradise—a quiet manse with all its quiet scenes of clerical work. So, after Mr. MacVicar had got fairly settled at Arderholm, and had had an opportunity of describing his situation to his betrothed, the two began first to dally with the idea of anticipating in the parish schoolhouse the paradise they were expecting; and then the idea gradually shaped itself into an idyllic picture of simple happiness, which at last completely obscured the more hazy picture of the grander, but distant and uncertain manse-life.

The anticipated happiness had been, in some respects, more than realised. They had, indeed, but one child—a wee lassie, now delighting them with all the charming prattle in which she gave expression to her five years' experience of human life. But this one child sufficiently filled the void which might otherwise have left an ache in the mother's heart; and the parents were freed from the care and expense of a young family, which often crush out much of the higher life in people of slender means. Their means, too, and their external comforts in general, had very materially improved; for the increase in the population of the parish had necessitated a corresponding increase in school accommodation.

The heritors of the parish had therefore erected a new building with a re- lence conveniently attached, more in accordance with the reasonable requirements of space and style in scholastic and domestic architecture than was common in Scotland at the time when the old schoolhouse was built.

Such was the man to whom was entrusted the task of preparing Willie Forbes for the University. Year after year, therefore, during school terms, the boy trudged every afternoon to the schoolmaster's house, who, perhaps for his own comfort as much as for that of his pupil, received him in his snug little parlour. The disadvantages of private tuition were, in his case, to a large extent, avoided or compensated by the character and method of his teacher. Mr. MacVicar very properly insisted on his private pupil performing his prescribed tasks with the same punctilious regularity which he enforced in the public school. The direct relation, also, into which the two were brought as they sat at their work in the quiet of the schoolmaster's parlour, became of course something very different from the relation of a public teacher to the indiscriminate gathering of a school. Private lessons naturally assume more of the character of friendly dialogue than of authoritative communications from a master; and consequently

a peculiar kind of friendship very often springs up between the teacher and the pupil. It was not long therefore before the schoolmaster of Arderholm and ... new scholar became bound to one another by a very kindly affection.

This mutual attachment showed itself in most beneficial effects with the approach of the first spring after the lessons had begun. The brief daylight of the Scotch winter compelled Willie Forbes to return home immediately after his lessons were over, so that he and his teacher saw little of each other for some months except during the lesson hours. But, as the days began to lengthen in the spring, Willie might often be seen, when the weather was fair, loitering in true school-boy fashion, unless the weather drove him indoors. The schoolmaster, too, evidently began to feel the young life of the spring thrilling through his blood, and impelling him to seek in the open sunny air of the mountains a relief from the long confinement of the winter. On fine afternoons, therefore, as soon as he had got rid of his pupil, he usually started off, with all the zest of his own scholars set free from school, for a quiet stroll with his wife and daughter, or for a bolder and longer tramp by himself up one

of the mountain paths which radiate from Arderholm.

On one of these beautiful afternoons in early May the light of the declining sun was streaming in at the window of the parlour where Willie was going over his lessons, its glare softened by the mellow green of the young spring grass from which it was reflected, and of the opening leaves through which it fell fitfully, fretting with changeful arabesque the floor and walls of the room. The window had been thrown open to admit the fresh air, which even at this early season an unclouded sun had tempered with the balmy warmth of summer, and it was obvious that both master and pupil found the situation not a little distracting. Ever and anon the attention of both was interrupted by a louder rustling among the leaves from a fresh gust which poured into the room an additional supply of the delicious air, and, by its bracing effect upon the lungs, made them involuntarily pant for more. Occasionally, also, they could hear the triumphant notes of a lark dying away into a faint trill as he mounted far into the blue overhead, or swelling again into a contented shake as he slowly approached the earth, and ceasing abruptly as he dropt upon the ground. At times, too, the ear was startled by the

clear song of the blackbird as he fluted to his mate the joys of their newly wedded life or his contentment with the abundance of grubs in the neighbouring gardens and fields.

The master therefore felt, probably as much as his pupil, the relief of getting their lesson done, and being free to yield to the temptation to rush out of doors. He knew that he could not get the company of his wife this afternoon, and yet he felt that without some companionship the luxury of his walk could not be enjoyed to the full. He therefore turned to his pupil as they rose from their task, and said, "Willie, are you fond of walking? I generally take a walk these fine afternoons, but I like company; and if you cared to come with me, I could enjoy it more."

"I would like it very well, sir," replied the boy; "but where are you going?"

"Anywhere you like," said the schoolmaster; "it's much the same to me."

"But," Willie explained, "why I asked was because I must be back at six o'clock. We take tea then; and if I'm not home, mother would be feared that something had happened."

"Well," said Mr. MacVicar, pleased with the boy's generous thoughtfulness for his mother, "I'll tell

you what we'll do. We'll go round by Burnside, and tell your mother where we're going. So she'll not be anxious if we are a bit late. But we'll try and get back before six."

So off they started. But the intoxicating atmosphere of the mountains and the splendour of the panorama which they open to the climber's view lifted both master and pupil into that mood of exalted health in which time is apt to be obliterated until it is obtruded in the consciousness of returning material wants. They found, therefore, that it was nearer seven o'clock than six, and that tea was over at Burnside, when they got back. So, in justice to the boy, Mr. MacVicar went into the house with him to make the necessary explanations.

"I must apologise, Mrs. Forbes," he said, "for keeping Willie so late. Of course it was my fault altogether. But the truth is, the weather was so charming that I miscalculated the time."

"Or perhaps," said Mr. Forbes in good humour, "you forgot to make a calculation. But I don't wonder at it, Mr. MacVicar, on such a fine evening, and after being confined in the schoolhouse all day. But there's no harm done. Only, I hope you won't let Willie impose on you by taking up too much of your time."

"No fear o' that, Mr. Forbes. It was for my sake he came, and I enjoyed my walk a thousand times better than if I had been alone. In fact, I'm going to beg his company a little longer. I see you have finished tea, and I know mine will be waiting for me. Now, I think the best plan will be for Willie to come along wi' me."

"Would you not rather just sit down and take your tea here," suggested Mrs. Forbes. "Though we have finished, I can get some ham and eggs ready in a few minutes. I'm sure you must both be hungry after your walk."

"It's very kind of you," replied Mr. MacVicar; "but my wife will be sure to be waiting for me. She knows that my time is rather uncertain when I go out for a tramp after school-hours, and so she leaves the tea-time a little indefinite. I think you had better just let Willie come wi' me."

"Well, Willie, what do you say yourself?" asked his mother.

"I would like it fine," replied the boy. "We had a grand walk up to the top o' Patricklaw. I was never so high up in my life before. The steamers down on the sea lookit just like wee boats. And Mr. MacVicar showed me flowers and birds and things that I never saw before."

"Well, well," was his mother's interruption, "you must tell me all about it again. Just run up stairs and wash your face and hands as quick as you can, and don't keep Mr. MacVicar waiting."

As Willie rushed up stairs, he nearly knocked over an old servant who had been in the house since he was born. "Bless me, William!" she exclaimed, "where have you been? I thought you was lost on the moors."

"Nae fears o' me, Kirstie," replied the boy in a state of pleased excitement. "I aye turn up again, ye ken, like the bad penny. But I'm going out to tea, and I'm in an awfu' hurry."

"Losh me! laddie," exclaimed Kirstie again, "ye canna gang tae a pairty wi' thae claes."

"Oh! it's no a party," was the boy's reply; "it's just to take tea wi' Mr. MacVicar. And mother says I'm to wash my face and hands as quick as I can, so as no to keep Mr. MacVicar waiting."

"Aweel," said Kirstie, "if that's a', just gie me your jacket."

And, while he was washing, the faithful woman brushed his little coat, and then, going down on her knees, she swept the dust from his trousers and boots. In five minutes he returned to the parlour

with shining face and clothes as tidy as if it were morning.

"Hillo! Willie," exclaimed Mr. MacVicar on observing the transformation which the boy had undergone at the hands of Kirstie, "you'll put me out of countenance altogether if you go into my house such a swell alongside of me all dusty wi' the road. But let us go. I daresay you're ready for your tea."

"Don't stay late, Willie," was his mother's parting injunction, as he disappeared with the schoolmaster.

Nothing worthy of note occurred during the remainder of the evening, but the day proved of incalculable importance for the success of Mr. MacVicar as teacher and of William Forbes as learner. It knit the two together, as nothing before had done, by that kindly confidence which facilitates so much the communication of mind with mind. In consequence of this also the day served as the forerunner of many such, which formed an influence in the development of the boy's character more valuable than all his book-lessons.

CHAPTER IX.

Dugald M'Killop, the Wright.

" His words came feebly, from a feeble chest,
But each in solemn order followed each,
With something of a lofty utterance drest—
Choice word and measured phrase, above the reach
Of ordinary men; a stately speech;
Such as grave livers do in Scotland use,
Religious men, who give to God and man their dues."

—*Wordsworth.*

Mr. and Mrs Nicoll had taken up house in a cottage which lay on the right bank of Arderburn, a short distance above the village. The sloping bank on the north side of the cottage was covered with a variety of ferns, which led to the place being known as Fernie Brae. The solitude of her new home might have been at first rather oppressive to the young wife if it had not been fortunately often enlivened by the appearance of her former pupil, Willie Forbes. Owing to their old familiarity, she could, of course, leave him to himself whenever she was engaged with other duties; and on her return

she usually found him squatted in some quaintly boyish position, reading some book which he had picked up from her husband's collection. After a while it became evident that it was this collection of books that formed the most constant of all the attractions which drew the boy to Fernie Brae. The collection was not large; it did not amount to more than a few hundred volumes: but, compared with anything Willie had seen, it appeared inexhaustible. The mental appetite of a boy is not usually more curious than his bodily appetite, readily devouring anything that it finds to be at all digestible; and, as Willie Forbes was left to himself among Mr. Nicoll's books, he roamed, in rather unmethodical fashion, over a very wide range of subjects. This style of reading has its disadvantages; but its effects are seriously disastrous only when poison is mixed indiscriminately with the food of the mind. Wherever the child is restricted to a fairly well selected library, it often happens that the kindly providence, on which we depend for our daily bread, leads him by the instinctive guidance of a healthy natural appetite to the food best adapted for his mental growth more unerringly than if he had been supplied by the rigid prescriptions of another mind.

One afternoon, about a year after Mrs. Nicoll's

marriage, Willie had dropped into the cottage on his way home from his daily lesson. He had been there in the earlier part of the day, and had taken up a book which evidently exercised an unusual fascination. It was *The Lady of the Lake*. He had never felt the power of metrical form in language before; but now the eager strain of Scott's rapid iambics hurried him on, and seemed to ring in his ears all the afternoon. He had therefore been drawn, almost insensibly, back to Fernie Brae to continue his reading. He was stretched at length on the parlour floor with his head propped up by his hands and the book lying open before him, when Mr. Nicoll entered.

"Hillo, Willie!" he exclaimed, "I didn't know you were here."

"Oh!" replied the boy, jumping to his feet, "I'm afraid it must be late. I suppose it's tea-time, and they'll be wondering where I am. I must run home."

"Never mind about that," said Mr. Nicoll. "Since you are late, you'd better just stop and take tea with us. Dugald M'Killop's here. He's just going home; and I'll tell him to call at Burnside on his way, and say to your mother that you're stopping here for tea."

At this point Mrs. Nicoll's voice was heard in the lobby, saying, "Here, Dugald; this is the sketch. Take it, and look over it; and, if you have time, you might come up again after you've had your supper, and we can talk over it."

"I hae naething particlar tae dae the noo, mem," replied Dugald; "and I may as weel come the nicht as ony ither time."

"Dugald," broke in Mr. Nicoll, "would you look in at Burnside as you're passing, and tell Mrs. Forbes that Willie's going to take his tea here?"

"O Willie!" exclaimed Mrs. Nicoll, coming into the parlour, "excuse me, my boy. You're so quiet, I forgot all about you. But I'm glad you're going to stay for tea. Just run upstairs; you know where to go to wash your hands. Tea 'll be ready when you come down."

As Willie came back to the parlour, Mr. Nicoll had in his hand the book which the boy, in his sudden surprise, had left on the carpet.

"I see," he said, as they went to the tea-table, "it's *The Lady of the Lake* you've been reading."

"Aye," replied the boy with a look of eager delight, "it's a splendid story. But—is't true, Mr. Nicoll?"

"O yes, partly."

"Well, whereabouts is the lake?" continued the eager questioner.

"Oh! it's not so very far from here—not more than twenty or thirty miles, I should think, as the crow flies."

"Is that all!" exclaimed the boy in delighted surprise, as if the glorious dream which the poet had conjured up were transformed into a living reality which he might see any day. "My! I would like to see it!"

Mr. Nicoll, turning to his wife, asked, "Have you ever been at the Trossachs, Annie?"

"No," was the reply, "I've seen very little of Scotland."

"Well, now," her husband went on, "I've never been there myself. I'll tell you what I think. Wouldn't it be a good idea, when the first holiday comes round, to take a trip there, and take Willie with us?"

A good part of the meal was spent in talking over the proposed trip, and they were still at the tea-table when Dugald M'Killop returned in accordance with his agreement. He lived with an only daughter in a very unpretentious cottage, a little way out of the village, with an acre or two attached to it, on which he pastured a cow, besides cultivat-

ing some common vegetables. His supper consisted of a large bowl of oatmeal porridge, with nearly an equal quantity of milk from his own cow; and as far as healthy relish for his meat in eating it or healthy digestion of it afterwards is concerned, he had no reason to envy the most luxurious gourmand over a bill of fare the cost of which may have exceeded Dugald's consumption for months. He had therefore been able to despatch his supper without any great expenditure of time on the operation, and was thus back at Mrs. Nicoll's before the meal in her house was fairly over.

To explain Dugald's engagement at Fernie Brae this evening, it must be known that he was carpenter at the mill. He was therefore often called in at Burnside when any odd job in woodwork had to be done. In fact, like many an intelligent artisan in villages and small towns, where the division of labour cannot be carried very far, Dugald could turn his hand to a great many occupations, from which a city artisan would simply turn away as work for another tradesman. His services therefore were very often in requisition at Burnside, when any sort of mechanical difficulty had to be got over. He had thus been often brought into contact with Mrs. Nicoll when she was a member of the Burnside

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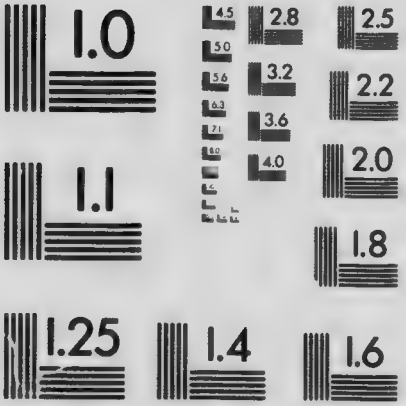

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family. Many of his operations had to be carried on under her direction, and a very kindly relationship had thus sprung up between the two. The artisan was often thrown into admiration of the young lady in consequence of suggestions by which she enabled him to give a certain artistic neatness to his work, while she was not only pleased with his mechanical ingenuity, but often found profit as well as entertainment in the shrewd remarks drawn from him in the course of their conversation.

For Dugald was of a type of artisans who invest with the dignity of manhood the commonest handicrafts of life. He belonged to the M'Killops of Arran; but his father had gone in youth to seek his fortune in Ayr, and had married there a Janet Dale, daughter of one of the neighbouring small farmers. There was thus a strong dash of Saxon blood in Dugald's veins; and the Celtic fire in his nature burnt with a steadier glow by being fed with such a quantity of less explosive Saxon fuel. In Ayr Dugald had enjoyed a better education than he could have had in Arran. It was at least such as gave him a taste for reading, and enabled him to enjoy such literature as came within his reach and he found leisure to study. There were two literary influences that had been predominant in his mental

life: these were Robert Burns and Thomas Carlyle. Though these did not shape his religious thought always in conformity with orthodox fashions yet he retained an extremely conservative reverence for the religious institutions and customs of Scotland. He observed Sunday with a good deal of Scottish Sabbatarian stringency. He went to church regularly; and what books he read on Sunday were mainly of a religious class. Among these the Bible was the most permanent as well as prominent, and he read it with an unfailing, rather with a growing, interest in the literary and religious edification it afforded; so that it remained a controlling influence, even above Carlyle and Burns, in giving a tone to his views of life.

Mrs. Nicoll had called for his services this evening to execute something she had planned for the improvement of her cottage home. Behind the parlour was a small room which was at present unused. The plan was to convert this into a library, and Mrs. Nicoll had made a sketch of the shelving and other conveniences required. "Well, Dugald," she asked as the carpenter entered, "do you think you can understand my rough sketch?"

"A body boot tae unnerstaun' 't, mem," was the ready reply. "You couldna hae drawn't better

though you had been at the wark a' your days. The maister I saired my time wi' in Ayr never drew a design like that, and he was thocht tae be a first-rate draughtsman."

"Why, Dugald," exclaimed Mr. Nicoll with a genial laugh, "if I didn't know you so well I would have taken you for an Irishman that had kissed the blarney stone, and given it a good hearty smack too."

"Weel," replied Dugald, "they say the Scots were Irish at first, and maybe the Arran folks that I belang tae cam frae Ireland lang syne; but I'm feared they've lost the gift o' the gab that's needed for talking blarney. It was naething but sober truth I spoke the noo aboot Mrs. Nicoll's drawing. Ye may weel be prood o' your wife, Mr. Nicoll."

"You and I won't differ very much on that score, Dugald," said Mr. Nicoll, with a smile; and he was going on with the humorous talk when his wife interrupted him. "Come away, now," she said, "you had better not be saying all these fine things to my face, or I'll begin to suspect what you say about me behind my back. The design's neither here nor there. It may be torn up as soon as the work designed is finished. It's that work we want done. Would'nt you like to see the room, Dugald?"

"That's just what I was going to ask, mem," he

replied. "If I got a look at the room, I would ken better hoo the job would look when it's dune."

The whole party then adjourned to the proposed library, and discussed the plan of improvement in all its details. They were just finishing their talk when Mrs. Forbes was ushered. She had come, she explained, to take her boy home.

"I'm sorry," said Mr. Nicoll, "you should have taken the trouble to come over merely for that. I'll be glad at any time to take a daunder with him as far as Burnside, and I daresay Annie would often be very glad to come with me. Then here's Dugald M'Killop to-night; he would gladly have acted as escort."

Dugald had been feeling a little awkward constraint on finding himself in the same company with his employer's wife; but he took the opportunity of saying that "Maister Weeliam was a fine boy. He comes noo and than into the shop to get a bit o' wood for something or ither, and we often hae a nice crack thegither."

"I'm glad to hear that, Dugald," the mother remarked. "I know he'll never learn anything to do him harm in your shop."

"I hope not, mem," was the reply.

"By the bye, Dugald," Mrs. Forbes went on, "I

saw you in the new church yesterday. What did you think o' the sermon?"

To explain the question, it must be observed that till now there had been no place of worship in Arderholm except the parish church. But the influx of the population attracted by the extension of the mill had introduced a considerable number of Dissenters. Those were the days when the first enthusiasm, excited in Scotland by the movement of 1843, was far from being spent; and though other Dissenters generally joined the parish church without serious scruple, the adherents of the Free Church yielded to the necessity of the case only with some twinges of conscience, justifying their conformity by the plea that it was better to hear the word of God even in an Erastian establishment than not to hear it at all. This state of feeling naturally led at last to the erection of a separate place of worship. The new building had just been completed, and had been formally opened the day before by one of the leaders of the Free Church. The fame of the preacher, and the unusual nature of the event—nothing of the kind having ever occurred in the parish before—had attracted many of those who regularly worshipped in the parish church, and, among others, Dugald M'Killop.

When appealed to by Mrs. Forbes for his opinion about the sermon, Dugald was evidently reluctant to tell his own mind.

"I thocht the sermon was very logical," he said, drawling his words as if he spoke with hesitation, and giving a very long *o* in his utterance of *logical*. "I mean," he went on, when he observed his hearers waiting for an explanation, "the minister was real clever at arguing oot what he wanted to say; but," he added, resuming his former deliberate drawl, "maybe some folks would na alloo the doctrine he laid doon tae start wi'."

"I take it, then," said Mr. Nicoll, who began to get interested in Dugald's manner, and had formed his own opinion of the sermon, "your approval is not quite unqualified. What makes you think the preacher's doctrine might be questioned?"

"Weel, you mind, Mr. Nicoll, the text was, 'God will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.' Noo, I would na tether a preacher up tae the very words o' his text, but I dinna like to see him flee in the face o't. It's true the sermon yesterday did na wander very far frae the text. Maybe ye would say it stuck ower close tae't; for it was just a lang attempt tae prove that the text's no true. It's clear the minister had got

into his noddle some system o' diveenity that could na fit in very weel wi' his text. But his system o' diveenity boot to be true at a' costs; sc he just concluded it canna be strictly true that God will hae *all* men to be saved. He would hae dune better just to get rid o' his text a'thegither, the way Tommy Dykes did."

"How was that?" Mr. Nicoll asked.

"Weel, you see, Tommy was a bit haverin' body they made an elder o' in Kilmarnock aboot the time that Mr Morrison was steerin a hornet's nest wi' lecturin' on the ninth chapter o' the Romans. Weel, I heard him ae day telling Bob Dickie that he had gane tae hear Morrison; and, 'would ye believe 't,' he said, 'I just got a hash o' fushionless Armeenianism.' Bob was a wabster tae his trade, and a wonnerfu' clever chiel, though he did na care a bodle about Arminianism or Calvinism. But he was unco fond o' drawing oot baith sides till he got them into a temper, and he was aye lauchin' in his sleeve at them a' the time. So Bob says to him, 'But, Tommy, what do ye mak' o' the text, *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling?*' Man, ye should hae seen the puir doited body. He lookit sair puzzled for a minute; and then, scartin' his head, he

said, 'Gin it had been the Lord's will, I would raither that passage had na been in the Bible.'"

During the merriment excited over Dugald's story, Mr. Nicoll turned to his wife and said, "'That's as good as the Frenchman's "'Tant pis pour les faits.'" Then, turning to the carpenter, he added, "I'm afraid, Dugald, you're no a sound Calvinist."

"I canna say that I ken muckle aboot Calvinism," was the reply. "Ye see, Mr. Nicoll, I'm no a scholar like you, and I never had time to read Calvin. I'm no sure that I ever saw ony o' his works, or ken very weel what they're aboot. But I would be sorry to think that ony man pretended to believe the gospel o' Christ, and thocht that God does na want a' men to be saved, but just wales a wheen favourites, and then lets a' the lave gang daunderin' tae perdition ony way they like best for a' that He cares. Surely that's no Calvinism, though it's maybe the doctrine o' some folk that ca' themsel's Calvinists. I would say raither it's the very opposite o' Calvinism."

The talk of Dugald was becoming a revelation to Mr. Nicoll. He had more than once heard his wife speak of the carpenter as a remarkable man; but her words had been to him little more than the complimentary utterances of a generous heart. He was

certainly not prepared to hear Dugald handle the popular theology with so much rough vigour. He himself, as already stated, had for years been far from satisfied with that theology; but he had always been accustomed to associate it with the Calvinistic system. He was therefore taken somewhat by surprise when he heard Dugald declare genuine Calvinism to be incompatible with any narrowing of the Divine Love, such as is commonly connected with the creed of ordinary Calvinists. Accordingly, he objected to the carpenter's last remark.

"I'm not quite sure that I understand what you mean by Calvinism. But if you're right, what are we to make of all the peculiarly Calvinistic doctrines of Predestination, and Election, and Eternal Decrees, and God's Sovereignty, and His doing everything according to the pleasure of His own will, and so forth?"

"Ah! there ye hae me again, Mr. Nicoll. I tell't ye I was na a scholar, and I'm no sure that I unnerstaun thae lang-nebbit words. But d'ye think that they mean onythin' except"—and he paused a moment—"except maybe just that God *is* God. They just tell ye that, because God is infinite in power, naething can keep Him—nae passions or pre-

judices like oors can keep Him—frae predestinatin' or foreordainin' or decreein' or electin' just what pleases Himself. But then ye maun keep in mind that it's Himself that maun be pleased—a Being infinite in wisdom and justice and goodness. In fack, predestination or election could na be the wark o' God ava, if it just took tent o' a wheen pets o' His ain that He takes a fancy for. It maun tak' in the puir ragged weans o' every drucken ne'er-dae-weel and every African nigger, wi' just as muckle care for them as for the preevileged bairns o' ony minister or philosopher, aye or for the bairns o' the Queen hersel'."

The words of the carpenter evidently made an impression which no one at first seemed willing to mar. The silence was broken at last by Mrs. Forbes saying, "I would have been very glad to wait and hear your talk out. It has interested me very much. But I see my boy's getting sleepy."

"Well, Annie," said Mr. Nicoll, turning to his wife, "what do you say to a stroll as far as Burnside?"

"I'd like it immensely," was her reply. "I've had no walk to-day."

"Weel, mem," said Dugald, "if you don't object,

I would like to stay for quarter an hour, just tae tak twa-three measurements."

"All right," was the reply, "just use your freed'om. I'm r uch obliged to you for taking so much trouble."

CHAPTER X.

Muscular Christianity.

"But how shall we this union well express?
Nought ties the soul; her subtlety is such
She moves the body, which she doth possess,
Yet no part toucheth, but by Virtue's touch."

—*Sir John Davies.*

Five years have passed since Willie Forbes began his preparation for the University under Mr. MacVicar. He is just at the transition stage between boyhood and young manhood. His appearance and manners still bear a delicious flavour of the boy; but he betrays at times, in advance of his years, a manliness of sentiment which is probably due, in a large measure, to his peculiar intercourse with his teacher. Midsummer has come again, and brought with it the school vacation; but it has brought also a problem with regard to the future of Willie Forbes, similar to that which had been raised five years before by the marriage of Annie Henderson. For the school-

master frankly confesses that he has brought his pupil as far as he can, and that it would be a mere waste of time to continue longer with him. He is, in fact, quite ready to enter the University. There had been as yet no final decision on this subject. His father and mother had, in an indefinite way, often spoken of him as going to be a minister; and, probably in the same indefinite way, the boy seemed to take for granted that that was to be his destination. But the time had come when the matter could be left no longer in the region of vague talk: a practical decision had to be made.

Once more the old circle of friends, Mr. and Mrs. Nicoll, with the schoolmaster and his wife, are met at Burnside. Tea is over, and they are sitting in the parlour with its glorious outlook down the little strath of Arderburn, and out upon the western sea and sky, which are beginning to glow with a warmer light as the sun slopes slowly to its rest. Willie Forbes had, with a genuine boyish eagerness, hurried through his meal before the others had well begun; and with a boy's abrupt apology, had started off to enjoy some evening sport at Inverarder. His brother had also gone out to some amusement of his own.

The absence of Willie, as well as of his brother, allowed the conversation in the parlour to deal

freely with his name; and the subject discussed had reference rather to his past than to his future education. His father, who had all along been opposed to private tuition, confessed now that, as far as scholarship was concerned, he was more than satisfied—he had even a bit of honest fatherly pride in his son's attainments; but he never gave up his prejudice in favour of public schools.

"I aye think still," he said, "that Willie should just have roughed it with other boys in the school. I'm afraid you've made him ower tender a plant for this rough world."

"No fear o' that," was Mr. Nicoll's reply. "There's not a tougher constitution in the parish than that boy has got. If you would pull an oar with him, as I've done no farther gone than Saturday last, you would perhaps find your arms giving in sooner than his. And as for his legs—why, I used to think myself a pretty fair pedestrian; but he and MacVicar, in their long tramps, would fairly walk me off my feet. I don't think all the rough games of any school could have developed stronger muscle than he has got."

"I daresay you're right," the father replied. "Willie seems to be a strong healthy boy. But I

was meaning rather strength of character, courage, and that sort o' thing."

"Well, for that," said Mr. Nicoll, "a good deal depends on physical health and strength. A brave man we often speak of as a man of nerve. It's very hard for a man of weak nerve and muscle to be brave."

"I've no doubt," Mr. Forbes chimed in, "that's quite true of physical courage—what folks sometimes call bull-dog courage."

"It's true," interrupted Mr. Nicoll, "of the higher kind of courage—moral courage—as well."

"It was moral courage I meant," said Mr. Forbes. "Don't you think, now, a boy will grow up more manly if he has to fight his way through a school with other boys than if he's kept all by himself with a private tutor?"

"That depends on a good many circumstances," replied Mr. Nicoll; "and your question couldn't be answered without knowing each particular case. I confess I don't think Willie has been very unfortunate—I think rather he has been peculiarly fortunate—in the circumstances in which he has been placed for the last few years. To make a boy manly, something more is needed than fighting his way among other boys: in fact, something is generally

needed to counteract the coarse influence of his companions. For you can't get a pack of boys in any school without a good deal of meanness coming out in some of them at times; and one or two may be real young devils in the making."

"That's true," observed Mr. Forbes, while, as if by the influence of memory, he fell back into the broad Scotch of his school-days. "I mind, when I was at the pairish schule in Mr. Hamilton's time, there were some gae rouch chaps among us. But," after a moment's pause he went on, "there were some fine chiels tae, and they kep the bad boys down pretty weel."

"That's just the point I was at," continued Mr. Nicoll. "You must have some influence to counteract the bad boys. Maybe the best influence of this sort is a boy's own home, especially his mother and sisters. That's why I would never send a boy to a boarding school, unless he's an orphan with no home at all, or there is no school near, where he can get his education. There's many a nasty thing a boy would say or do with other boys, if he didn't know that he had to face his mother and sisters when he got home."

Mr. Forbes nodded a hearty assent, but said nothing.

"Well, now," Mr. Nicoll went on, as he looked towards the window niche on the other side of the room, where his wife and hostess were engaged in earnest conversation with the schoolmaster, "I see that Mrs. Forbes and Mr. MacVicar are not listening: so we may talk about them without hurting their feelings, and I daresay neither you nor Mrs. MacVicar will object to what I say. It would be hard to find any boy who has a better influence at home than Willie for bringing out all that's best in his nature. I've had a good many chances of seeing the devout loyalty he feels for his mother, as if it would never occur to him to do anything she wouldn't like. Then just think of the advantage he has had with his teacher!"

"You had better say, his teachers," Mr. Forbes broke in. "Don't forget how much he's indebted to your wife."

"I'm no likely to forget that," replied Mr. Nicoll. "But it has just been a surprise to me, as well as an extraordinary pleasure, to see the interest that Mr. MacVicar takes in the boy. I knew, of course, that he would do his duty faithfully by schooling him well in his lessons. But I don't think we had any right to expect more, and I never looked for any more. I never thought of his making Willie his

companion as he has done; and I think it has just been an incalculable boon to the boy, that he has spent so much of his time with a man that's not only well-informed, but as true as steel. That's been infinitely better for him than a noisy struggle with ignorant boys, many of them no better than they should be. I'm pretty certain," he added, after a moment's pause, "that, if it comes to the moral courage of speaking the truth or doing what's right without fear of the consequences, you'll find Willie has got as much of that article as any boy you're likely to meet."

"I hope so," said Mr. Forbes, "and I own I can't deny a single word you say. But still, I can't help thinking it's a want, that he has mixed so little with other boys."

"I'm afraid, Mr. Forbes," Mrs. MacVicar broke in with her quiet voice and manner, "you don't know your own son so well as I do. I see him often when the school's *skailin*, waiting outside till Mr. MacVicar's ready for him; and he has to meet all the scholars—girls and boys—as they come rushing out. Well, you know that when boys are just let out of school, there's 'nae haudin' or bindin' them,' as the saying is; and there's often a good deal o' rough fun among them. You would be surprised to

see how heartily William goes into it; and when it comes to a wrestling-match, as it does sometimes in fun, he just holds his own wi' the best o' them."

"Well, Mrs. MacVicar," replied Mr. Forbes with a laugh of gratification, "I'd never have thought that possible; but I'm glad to hear it."

"Besides," Mrs. MacVicar added, "you would be more pleased if you saw how popular he is with the boys. They always call him William George, as if it wouldn't be proper to call him just *Wullie*, like any of themselves. I've heard some o' them saying, 'He's a real nice boy, William George; he's no a bit prood.' And as for the lasses—poor things, I'm afraid he's beginning to play mischief among them already."

"Hoot, toots!" exclaimed Mr. Forbes, with impatience perhaps as well as amusement, "I hope you'll no put that nonsense into the laddie's ain heid."

"Nonsense or no," replied Mrs. MacVicar, "it's true all the same. No that William himself pays much attention to the girls; but when he's forced to it, he treats them like a little gentleman. Do you know that daughter o' David Boyd's—a tall girl wi' heavy brown hair, and rosy cheeks, and large, round tender eyes?"

"Yes," was Mr. Forbes' reply, "I've noticed her in the kirk. She's a bonnie lassie."

"Ha! ha!" broke in Mr. Nicoll with his good-humoured laugh. "I see, Mr. Forbes, you've got an eye for a pretty face yet. Well now——"

"But, excuse me, Mr. Nicoll," said Mrs. MacVicar, "you must let me tell my story."

"Oh! excuse *me*, rather," replied Mr. Nicoll. "I declare I'm getting quite interested in the little beauty myself. Do go on, please."

But Mr. Nicoll's mirthful humour had been raised to a state of very unstable equilibrium, so that it continued to explode fitfully for some time. It was not, therefore, without a good many jocular interruptions that Mrs. MacVicar was allowed to tell her story. The story, however, can be told more intelligibly in a few words. It seems that, one day not long before, when the children were coming out of school, and Mary Boyd, with some other girls, was passing the schoolmaster's house, a big coarse boy, Mike Sullivan by name—an ill-assorted mongrel of low Irish father and low Scotch mother—in a spirit of rude fun pushed a little boy violently against the girls, so that Mary, who received the main shock, was nearly knocked down, her school-bag was dashed from her hand, and its contents spilt

on the muddy road. The vulgar lout burst into a coarse laugh on seeing the disaster to the books; but Willie Forbes, who was standing by, fired into a passion of indignation which thrilled through every muscle in his body, ran atilt against the culprit with his shoulder, and sent him spinning and reeling to the other side of the road with such force that he was saved from falling only by staggering into a thorn hedge.

"O ye big cooard!" exclaimed Willie, "ye dae that tae a lassie because ye ken she canna hit you back. Gang and dae't to Bob Broon or ony boy as big's yoursel."

"I would like tae see him," called Bob.

"Just let him come and try't," echoed two or three other voices, boys being only too ready, like older people, to join the chorus of insults to the beat n party.

Mike was evidently smarting from the scratches of the prickly hedge, and fairly cowed by the sudden completeness of his discomfiture. He did not therefore seem inclined to take up the challenges flung at him, and slunk away, as the narrator with her quiet humour expressed, "like a doug wi' hingin' lugs and its tail between its legs."

Meanwhile Willie had turned to pick up Mary

Boyd's soiled books; and before she had time to observe his movements, he was wiping them clean with his pocket handkerchief.

"O William George!" she exclaimed, "don't do that. "You'll dirty all your handkerchief."

"What about that?" he replied, "it can wash."

"Oh! but your mother 'll be angry if she knows I let you spoil your handkerchief that way," urged Mary, abashed and puzzled at finding herself for the first time in her life the object of a generous courtesy from a boy, and that boy William George.

"Nae fears o' that, Mary," replied Willie, whose sentiments and language were apt to rise when they referred to his mother. "I know mother better than that; I know she wouldn't be pleased wi' me if I hadn't done this for you."

All this time Willie had been too much occupied with his courteous task to take any particular notice of Mary, and she was thus allowed to watch his movements without any disturbing look from him. But as he handed back her books, their eyes met for the first time. It seemed to her as if his eyes looked into her innermost thoughts and feelings. A deep blush spread over her face and neck, and tingled even in her ears. Willie evidently felt a little awkward too; but fortunately at this point Mr.

MacVicar called him in, and saved them both from further confusion. Mary then turned, with the blush fading from her face, to her companions, and had to run the gauntlet of some teasing remarks from them. "But," Mrs. MacVicar observed, as she concluded her narrative, "there's not one o' the girls didn't envy Mary the accident which gave her a chance of receiving a courtesy from William George; and they would all be glad to have their books tumbled in the mud every day if they could get him to pick them up and hand them back as he did with Mary's."

"There now, Mr. Forbes," said Mr. Nicoll, "I don't know that I can appreciate the sentimental side of Mrs. MacVicar's story, and I daresay both Mary and Willie are as heartwhole as they should be at their age. But the story proves what I was saying about the boy's courage. I bet you he never stopped a moment to count the cost, or calculate whether he mightn't come off second best in a stand-up fight wi' that big lump of a boy. He just saw that a cowardly wrong had been done, and with a genuine young chivalry he felt that he had to do something to put it right. And so in a rough-and-ready way—a charmingly boyish way, I think—he rushes at the wrongdoer, and, after getting him disposed of pretty effectually, he turns to the injured

damsel and sacrifices his pocket handkerchief to repair her wrongs. Why, Mrs. MacVicar, if your story was put in a book it would read like a chapter from the chronicles of knight errantry."

"Maybe it would," remarked Mr. Forbes, "if you were to write it. Man, you've got a first-rate knack o' putting things in a pleasant light. However," he added, "it's just as well for Willie the affair passed off without a scuffle wi' that big chap, Mike. I'm pretty sure he would have got a mauling."

"Why, Mr. Forbes," said Mr. Nicoll, "I'm beginning to think, with Mrs. MacVicar, that you don't know your son as well as we do. If Mike had been silly enough to tackle Willie, he would have been carrying the marks of his folly to this day. Do you know that Willie has been taking lessons in the noble art of self-defence?"

"I confess I didn't know it," said Mr. Forbes. "How did that come about?"

"Thereby hangs a tale," was the reply. "You know Mrs. Dymock's cottage at the foot o' the road wi' the pretty lawn and shrubbery in front. Well, it seems an English family has taken it this summer; and there are two boys in the family that have been at Rugby. These boys have brought their boxing gloves and other gear, and they have been setting up

the boys at Inverarder to some of th sports of the English schools that are not so well known in Scotland. So, one evening last week, after I had been out for a sail, I was coming up from the shore, when I was attracted by a lot of boys on the lawn in front of the cottage making a good deal of noise with their loud talk and laughter. I went over to see what they were up to, and you may guess my surprise when I saw Willie wi' his jacket off, pulling on a pair of boxing gloves to take a turn wi' one o' the Rugby boys. I was curious to see the upshot: so I moved alongside a laurel, where I couldn't easily be seen. At first I was just a wee bit afraid o' Willie, for the English boy had clearly the better of him in skill, and gave him a few pretty rough blows about the head and shoulders. But after a minute or two Willie saw that there was no chance for him against such skill, except by just keeping on his guard. So he kept very patiently on his defence for two or three minutes, till the other made a lurch forward to strike a blow with his right arm; but Willie parried the blow with such force that his opponent was thrown off his balance, and Willie sent a swift straight stroke on his left cheek that threw him sprawling on the grass."

"You fairly astonish me," said Mr. Forbes, "I didn't think th. _ was so much pluck in the laddie."

"You see I was right, Mr. Forbes," remarked Mrs. MacVicar; "you didn't known your own son as well as we do."

"However," continued Mr. Nicoll, "it's only fair to the English boy to say that he took his defeat in very good humour. He jumped up at once, and shook Willie heartily by the hand. 'I say, Forbes, you're a brick,' he exclaimed. 'That was a magnificent stroke. It hit me like a sledge hammer. You must have splendid muscle in that arm of yours. And so he went chattering in his pleasant generous way till he brought a blush on Willie's cheek. Willie tried to decline the praise by asserting that the other boy had slipped on the soft turf. But his opponent wouldn't allow this. 'No, no, Forbes,' he exclaimed, 'none of your modesty. It was a perfectly fair game we played, and I was fairly beaten. But you must tell me the secret of your training.' 'I've had no training,' Willie replied, 'unless it be rowing in my boat. I daresay that puts some pith in my arm.' And so the two chaps went on as if their friendship had been eternally cemented by their fight. At last Willie happened to get sight of me; so he

bade the rest o' the boys good night, and came off wi' me, and we walked home together."

By this time Mr. Forbes apparently began to feel that perhaps his son had engrossed quite enough of the conversation. He therefore proposed some music, and Mrs. Nicoll was induced to go to the piano. But before she began, her hostess was called out of the room; and a few minutes afterwards a message was sent up to Mr. Nicoll to say that some person was waiting to see him at the door. When he went down-stairs, he found Mrs. Forbes in conversation with Dugald M'Killop, and evidently in perplexity, if not distress, over some story that Dugald was telling. The story, however, must be reserved for another chapter.

CHAPTER XI.

Victory Through Defeat.

"Saint Augustine! well hast thou said,
That of our vices we can frame
A ladder, if we will but tread
Beneath our feet each deed of shame."

—*Longfellow.*

The story, which Dugald M'Killop was telling to Mrs. Forbes, referred to her younger son. It will be remembered that Willie had hurried off early from the tea-table at Burnside to join in some amusement at Inverarder. On his way at the end of the village he had to pass a rude hut, where Mike Sullivan lived—an only child—with his father and mother. It chanced that, just at the time, Mike was standing at the side of the road, talking with half-a-dozen other boys. It was not unnatural that the humiliation to which he had been subjected a short time before, should be still rankling in his mind. The degrading influences of his coarse home life, his huge

flabby *physique*, and his strong animal instincts, combined to develop in him the disposition of a boyish bully; and his low pride in this character had suffered a terrible fall. In ordinary circumstances, his grudge against the author of his humiliation might not have been sufficiently energetic to rouse him to any active revenge; but unfortunately all the worse forces of his nature had been excited to unusual violence this afternoon. He had drawn out the gratitude of a carter by giving him some timely help at an odd job for an hour or two; and the carter's clumsy kindliness could hit upon no other channel of expression than by taking the boy into the village public-house and giving him a glass of whisky. Whisky was a very devil in the Sullivan blood, and poor Mike inherited a taint of the poison from both father and mother and—who knows how many?—generations of ancestors with the habits of intemperate tipplers. At this moment, therefore, the puny moral intelligence of the lad was completely silenced by the tumult of alcoholic impulses surging wildly along his usually dull nerves. In this condition the sight of Willie Forbes forced upon him with overpowering vividness the memory of his recent disgrace, and stung him for the moment into an uncontrollable frenzy. The other boys had been

attracted by the unwonted excitement in Mike's ordinarily sluggish manner, and were amusing themselves by provoking laughable extravagancies of braggart talk; but even they were thrown aghast when Mike's aimless insolence was suddenly turned against William George, whom they had always been accustomed to treat with a certain distant respect.

"Ah! here he comes!" called Mike. "He hasna got Bob Broon and the ither big callans to back him up noo. I'll gie him his fairin', the gentle puppy!"

Although the alcoholic origin of Mike's excitement had been made obvious to the other boys, yet it was not evident to Willie Forbes coming upon him in this sudden way. Accordingly, Mike's conduct appeared to him to be simply an outburst of pent-up wrath at the humiliation to which he had been subjected not long before. Though puzzled for a moment what to do, Willie thought it best to pass on with a mere look of disdain at Mike; but the unfortunate clown took this for an evidence of fear on Willie's part, and felt his own courage rise in proportion.

"Oh! just look at him," he exclaimed again; "I kent weel eneuch he was a cooard. He's frichtit tae fecht unless he's got some big chaps tae help 'im. But he'll no get aff sae easy noo."

Willie was still moving on, though with some

mental hesitation, when Mike made a rush after him, and, just as Willie was turning round, struck him a slap on the cheek, calling at the same time, "There's fugie tae ye!"

Any one acquainted with boys' customs and boys' language in Scotland, knows that this was an insult for which no satisfactory amends could be made but by a stand-up fight. Willie Forbes had the normal instincts of a healthy boy, and naturally felt stung to the quick by the insolence of Mike. That impulse from above or from beneath, which to the Pagan mind seems the inspiration of a war-god, took possession of his soul. But his nature was too well disciplined to let him be blindly carried away by martial fury. He was inferior to his antagonist in height and weight; but in every other respect—in clearness and rapidity of perception, in firmness of nerve, in quickness and accuracy of muscular stroke—he was immeasurably superior. His recent practice with boxing-gloves also gave him a cool confidence, which he could not have felt if he had been thus suddenly called to use his fists in self-defence for the first time. Perceiving at once that his inferiority in height was exaggerated by his position, he dodged round Mike, and got to the upper part of the road, a movement which his antagonist was too dull to understand.

Hurried on blindly by the galling memory of his former disgrace, and by the overweening vanity of his present courage, Mike began, in the lubberly fashion of undisciplined muscles, to swing his arms wildly about Willie's head; but his aimless blows were easily parried at no cost beyond a slight bruising of the arms. This ill-directed exertion involved a wasteful expenditure of energy, which left Mike in a minute or two completely blown, so that he was obliged to relax his efforts in order to recover breath. His opponent had now a chance of which he was not slow to take advantage. Throwing Mike entirely off his guard by a cleverly-managed feint with his left hand, Willie sent his right first—the fist that had knocked down the Rugby boy—in a straight swift stroke against Mike's nose and left eye. A spirt of blood gushed from Mike's nostrils; and, blinded for the moment by the [illegible] he staggered helplessly backwards till his heels caught on the stones of the rough road, and he fell to the ground with a heavy thud. The shock of his fall thrilled up through spine and brain, paralyzing the centres of thought and motion. A sickening dizziness, caused by the stupefying nervous shock, added to the nausea excited by the alcoholic irritation of the stomach; poor Mike became deadly pale, and, after a gruesome

twitch of his features, discharged the contents of his stomach into the adjoining gutter.

All this passed in a few seconds from the moment when the finishing blow was struck. Willie was standing with a look of puzzled horror at the effects of his blow, when Mike's mother, attracted by the noise on the road, made her appearance at the door of her hut.

"What mischief are you laddies up tae noo?" she called, as she looked round without being able to make out what had happened.

"It was a fecht, Mrs. Sullivan," said a little fellow named Bobby Birrell. "It was Mike fechtin' wi' William George, and he was knockit doon, and he's got a bluidy nose, and I think he'll hae a black keeker the morn."

"I'm feared he's hurt, Mrs. Sullivan," said Willie Forbes at last, becoming really somewhat frightened by Mike's pitiable plight.

"Nae fears o' that, Maister William," was the reply. "He's weel saired if ye've gien 'im a guid lickin'. It was real clever in ye tae dae't, and ye've just saved me the bother o' daein't mysel."

Then, turning to her unfortunate son, she broke out in infuriated tone and gesture, "Get up, ye guid-for-naething rascal; *you* even yoursel' tae fecht

wi' ony young gentleman! Get up, I tell ye." Here she added to the force of her words by a push with her foot, while her tongue went on, "Get up, or if I hae tae tak' a stick tae ye, my lad, I'll mak' your back as saft's your belly."

The filial affection, wakened in Mike by the words and action of his mother, was one of terror more than of love; but it had the effect of rousing him from his stupor. He got up and crawled, with a shaky gait, into the hut, evidently glad to hide himself from view. Fortunately for him, as he moved off, his mother's attention was attracted by Bobby Birrell again. This boy must have been born under the planet Mercury; the fairy boon at his birth was a mercurial spirit of fun. All the molecules in his composition seemed to have received from nature a queer curvilinear tendency. His hair bristled all over with fantastic curls. No amount of combing or brushing could smooth these down. The moment the smoothing tool was withdrawn, they sprang back into their spiral shapes with the elasticity of steel-springs. Bobby's eyes were perpetually rounded into a merry twinkle. The muscles about his mouth played along the wavy lines of a perennial smile. And when his mirth spread thrilling from top to toe, his arms and legs bent into double curves, while he

capered around in comical whirls. While Mrs. Sullivan was venting her wrath at her son, Bobby was dancing and grinning with merriment over the extravagancies of her furious language and manners. Her anger was therefore diverted to him ; but, as he kept at a safe distance, and as she knew that in a chase he could not only maintain his distance with ease, but even make a halt at intervals to taunt her with his irritating mockery, she was obliged to content herself with shaking her fist at him, while she almost screamed with rage, "O ye young vaigabond, I see ye sniggerin' and girnin' at me there. If I catch haud o' ye, my lad, I'll mak' ye lauch on the wrang side o' your mooth."

This shot was met by a general volley of derisive shouts from the whole troop of boys, which effectually drowned the remainder of the old termagant's words, so that she could only be seen gesticulating in impotent rage as she retreated into the house. By this time Willie Forbes was moving off, and he went on his way down to Inverarder.

But the struggle, through which he had just gone, had excited such a violent disturbance in his feelings that he was no longer of the same mind with which he had left home half-an-hour before. The outlook towards a pleasant evening with his companions at

Inverarder had become completely obscured; and he now walked on in a somewhat mechanical way without definite purpose. In this undecided state he came to the bend of the road, where it turns down to the sea; and, just as he got round the corner, he came upon Mary Boyd. In ordinary circumstances, he would have passed her with the simple smile which, among Scottish boys and girls, commonly does duty for the more ceremonious salutations of maturer years. But he found the little damsel in distress again. She held in her hand a handkerchief wetted with tears, of which the effects were very visible in her eyes. His chivalry was therefore roused afresh, and he could not but stay to ask what she was crying for.

"I was down at Inverarder spending the day," she explained, "and was just coming home; and when I turned the corner here, I saw Mike Sullivan on the road up there. I'm sure he must be tipsy; he was looking so wild and talking so horrid. And I was frightened to go up past him and the other boys. So I waited a long time to see if nobody would come to take me past them. And then I saw you coming down, and I was so glad, for I knew you wouldn't let any of the boys hurt me. Then I saw Mike trying to stop you and fight you; and I thought you

would surely be killed, he's such a horrid big boy. So I got frightened and began to cry." Here the poor girl started crying again. "But," checking herself, she added, "are you not hurt, William George?"

"Not much," he replied. "Did you not see the end of the fight?"

"O no," she said, with a voice trembling as if she were still scared. "I couldn't bear to look when I saw him smashing you right and left with his great big arms. So I came round the corner again, and I've been standing here crying all the time. But how were you able to get past him, William George?"

"I knocked him down," was the boy's reply.

"Oh! I'm so glad," exclaimed the maiden with a jubilant feeling of relief.

"But, poor chap, I'm afraid he's hurt," her champion explained; "he fell pretty heavy on the hard road, and he got a bad blow on his eye and nose."

But the attempt to evoke Mary's sympathy for Mike failed. "I'm not at all sorry," she protested, though she added after a moment's pause, "unless he's hurt real sore."

"Oh! I daresay he'll get over it soon."

"Then d'ye think it will be safe for me to go up the road now?"

"If you're afraid I'll go with you."

"But you were going to Inverarder."

"Yes, but I think I'll change my mind, and go back home."

"Oh! I'm awfully glad."

So the two started up the road, which was already completely deserted. They had but four or five hundred yards to go till they came to the point where their roads separated. As they were parting, Mary said, "I'll not see you again for a long time I'm afraid. I'm going to a school in Dresden that Mrs. Nicoll recommended to father."

The announcement was received with a simple exclamation of surprise from Willie. It was so unexpected that apparently he could not accommodate his thoughts to the fact. So he merely said, "Then I suppose I must say good-bye Mary," while he held out his hand. The hand was taken somewhat bashfully by Mary, as she replied, "Good-bye, William George, I'll never forget how kind you were." Her eyes seemed still to glitter with irrepressible tears as they turned to go their separate ways, not to meet again for years.

He that had Received the Five Talents.

While Willie Forbes was occupied with his second chivalrous service to Mary Boyd, his victory over Mike Sullivan was producing some unexpected effects in the defeated boy's home. As soon as Mrs. Sullivan calmed down, she began to reflect on the consequences of Mike's encounter with Willie Forbes. With her crude conception of human motives, she became filled with dread lest Willie's father, on hearing of her son's misconduct, would at once dismiss her husband from his employment at the mill, where he served as a common labourer. While she was ruminating on the best way to avert this calamity, she caught sight of Dugald M'Killop sauntering past her window. The carpenter's nature was so well known that she rushed out at once and induced him to come in by telling him that she was in trouble, and that he might be of help. After listening to her explanation, Dugald was able to relieve her by the assurance that Mr. Forbes was not likely to blame her husband for what had happened. Then, looking over to Mike, he asked—

"What are ye gaun tae dae wi' Mike, Mrs. Sullivan? Is't no time he was lairning some trade?"

"'Deed," was the reply, "I would be unco prood, Mr. M'Killop, if ye could make a tradesman o' him."

"Oh, Mr. M'Killop," exclaimed Mike, rousing

himself for the first time since the collapse of his defeat, "I would be awfu' gled tae."

"Weel, weel, we'll see aboot it," said Dugald, who seemed to have some project on his mind without knowing whether or how it could be carried out. "Ye'll no hae a face tae gang aboot wi' for a weel. tae come. That e'e o' yours looks as if it was shut up a' thegither, and it'll be as black's a slae afore the morn. I'll see if I can get a job for ye. But ye'd better tak' your supper noo, and gang awa' to your bed."

"I dinna want ony supper the nicht," said Mike, relapsing into his rueful look and tone.

"Dinna tak' on that way, man," urged Dugald with a kindly accent. "You'll sune get ower this wee bit trouble."

"I'm no takin' on, Mr. M'Killop," said the poor boy, not without a strain of pathos in his voice. "It's that confoondit whusky I got frae Tam Gibb the cairter. It's the horridest stuff I ever tasted—waur nor ony maidicine. It's made me as sick's a doug, and gien me a scunner for everything."

Dugald looked with very sincere pity at the penitent laddie for a few moments, and then said in a kindly tone, "I'm sorry to hear, Mike, that ye've

ta'en sae early tae that deil's drink. But I hope it'll be a lesson tae ye."

"Oh, Mr. M'Killop," exclaimed Mike, with a pitifully pleading accent, "dinna think that ill o' me, or maybe ye'll dae naething tae help me to get a job. As sure's death, it's the first time I ever tasted whusky a' my life; and there's ae thing sure and certain"—here he paused, and then went on with a fierce determination in his voice—"I'm hanged if I'll ever let a drap o' that stuff cross my mooth as lang's I leeve."

"I hope ye'll haud tae that, Mike," said his mother, her voice unusually softened towards her son with a momentary touch of genuine motherly regard.

"Aye, mither," replied Mike, "and it would be telling you, and faither tae, if ye would never taste it either."

"I'll no say but the laddie's richt, Mr. M'Killop," the conscience-stricken mother confessed. "I canna deny't but that Mike's faither and me sometimes tak's just a wee drap mair nor's guid for us."

At this point, Dugald felt that the conversation was passing into a region in which it would be better for him not to follow. Accordingly he stopped it by saying, "I maun be gaun noo. I'll gang and see

the manager; and if I hae onything tae tell you, I'll come and let ye ken the morn."

As Dugald walked up the road he half muttered, half reflected, to himself, "'Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?' It's odd we should hae had a sermon on that text last Sabbath. It's ower sune to be confident aboot that unlucky lad. But if the Lord's nigh tae them that hae a broken heart, surely He canna be far frae puir Mike the noo. I maun try and help the chiel, and the best help 'ill be tae set him tae steady, honest wark."

It was with these sentiments that Dugald had entered Burnside. After telling his story, somewhat imperfectly, to Mrs. Forbes, and then more fully to the manager, he went on to say, "If you'll excuse the liberty, Mr. Nicoll, I would like to speak aboot a change in the shop. The maister was saying to me last week that I micht get anither 'prentice tae help us, for the wark's been growing that much that whiles I canna get it a' dune in time. Noo, I was wunnerin' what ye would think o' Mike."

"I'm afraid," replied Mr. Nicoll, "from all accounts you wouldn't find him very quick at learning his trade. D'ye think he would give you much help?"

"In one sense," returned Dugald, "the laddie's

no particularly clever. As far's book-lairning's concerned, I daursay he hardly kens a B frae a bull's fit. But I dinna think mair schuilin' 'ill dae 'im ony guid. Ye'll never mak' a schoalar o' Mike."

"But," Mr. Nicoll urged, "he looks an awkward lubberly sort o' laddie, as if 'his fingers were a' thoombs.' I'd be afraid ye could never make him a good mechanic."

"Weel, Mr. Nicoll, "I'm no gaun to prophesy ower muckle aboot the callan'. But there's something aboot 'im—I canna weel say what it is—that mak's me willing tae try 'im. At ony rate, I would like tae gie the puir fellow a chance o' daein' better nor he's ever likely tae lairn in that hame o' his."

"Very well, Dugald," said the manager, who began to see that the carpenter's point of view was a moral interest in Mike rather than a merely economical interest in the work to be done, and with whom it was a growing conviction that the best economical results are often reached by starting from the moral point of view. "You ought to know best, and certainly there can be no harm in trying Mike for a few weeks. I think you may take for granted that Mr. Forbes will make no objections; and if you don't hear anything to the contrary in the morning, you can get Mike to begin work as soon as you like."

The result of this conversation was that Mike was installed as apprentice in the carpenter's shop at the mill, with what happy results will appear in the sequel of our story. As has often happened in the case of other men, Mike's [illegible]cal defeat was the beginning of a spiritual victo-

CHAPTER XII.

Shadows of Dawn.

"There is nothing upon earth
More miserable than she that has a son
And sees him err."

—*Tennyson's "Princess."*

The events of the evening recorded in last chapter brought little satisfaction to one heart in Arderholm. The womanly gentleness of Mrs. Forbes could not reconcile itself to the severity of the chastisement that Willie had inflicted on Mike Sullivan, richly though it had been deserved. But even if she had been able to overcome the repugnance which the incident excited in her mind, a ruder shock was given to her motherly interests by a discovery in reference to her elder son. After her guests had left, she learned from Kirstie that Jamie had come home and gone straight to his room. Fearing that he might be ill, his mother had gone up-stairs; and, seeing through the half-open door a light still burning in his room, she tapped gently, saying, "Are you in bed, Jamie?"

"Just taking off my clothes, mother," was the cheery voice which came from within, and its tone relieved for the moment the mother's anxiety.

But when she entered the room, she was struck at once by the heavy odour of a breath tainted by alcohol, which seemed to saturate all the air. "Oh, Jamie!" she exclaimed, "what's that? What a strong smell o' spirits?"

"Oh! it's nothing, mother. I just happened to fall in wi' the doctor, and he asked me to take a bit o' supper wi' him, and we had a tumbler o' toddy after; and I was so sleepy when I came home I thought I would just come straight off to bed."

"Doctor Todd's too old a companion for you, laddie, and you're too young to begin drinking toddy wi' grown-up men like him."

"Well, well, mother," was the good-humoured reply, "it's the first time I ever tasted toddy since yon night when you gied me some for a pain in my stomach."

"But you must be careful, Jamie," pleaded his mother, "no to fall into bad habits. Now, get into bed, and I think you'd better leave your window down a wee bit at the top, for your room's close and the night's warm."

"All right, mother," was the light-hearted young fellow's reply.

Though he was slightly troubled for a little with the bewildering throng of queer thoughts that streamed through his mind, and burst at times into startling prominence, after his head was laid on the pillow, he very soon found the peace of youthful slumber. But it was far otherwise with his mother. A spectral terror had risen before her mind that nothing could lay. As her son turned to her when she went into his room, she not only saw the alcoholic excitement in his eye, but she traced, or thought she traced, in his features, the lineaments of her brother Tom's face distinctly reproduced. The swift tragedy of Tom's brief career of riot was the one irredeemably painful memory of her early life, and the whole sad story was now recalled with a vividness which it had happily lost for years. As she lay through the sleepless hours of the dark, all the saddest scenes of the old tragedy passed before her imagination; but, as they passed, the features of her brother dissolved into those of her son.

The sleepless night left traces upon Mrs. Forbes, which were more felt by herself than discernible by others. Fortunately also, those traces were felt rather in the form of physical languor than in a con-

tinuance of the anxiety which had tormented her during the night. That anxiety had been excited by the pictures of horror with which her fancy had filled up the possible future of her son; and those pictures gained their vividness from the torpid senses leaving the brain unfettered in the creations of its morbid excitement. But the stupor of the senses wore off with the stillness and darkness of night. Roused by the welcome light and cheery sounds of opening day, her mind began to be occupied with the familiar realities of the waking world, and the creatures of its own dreams vanished. She rose therefore to the duties of the morning, languid indeed from the want of needed repose, but wondering why she should have allowed her peace of mind to be so violently broken by fears which now seemed so destitute of foundation. This relief was confirmed by the appearance of her son at breakfast. He, with the vigour of young health, had slept none the less soundly on account of his moderate indulgence of the previous evening; and his fresh morning looks were fitted to gladden the heart of any mother. The day therefore passed through its usual routine; and when another night brought to Mrs. Forbes her customary rest, it seemed as if the cloud, which had momentarily darkened her life, had melted away in

the serene atmosphere which ordinarily brightened her home.

Weeks went by in the even flow of useful labour which characterised the family at Burnside. Nothing occurred to revive the fears of Mrs. Forbes. She was struck indeed at times by an occasional play of the features, by an odd trick of manner in her son which recalled the likeness she had seen to her unhappy brother; but her mind was not affected, few minds are duly affected, by the presages of sorrow or of joy, which such likenesses may convey. Every human being bears with him, as the instrument of his work in life, an organic structure which is the product of innumerable influences, partly, perhaps mainly, ancestral; and, whenever any remarkable similarity of organic structure appears, it is not unreasonable to expect a similarity of dispositions, so far as these are dependent on organic causes. It is difficult, if not impossible, to tell what are the peculiar physical conditions on which the alcoholic mania depends; but, like other morbid states of mental life, it is connected by natural law with morbid physical conditions. However this may be, Jamie Forbes evidently bore some of the characteristic physical features of his uncle, who had made a tragic shipwreck in the wastes of intemperance; and before

many months were gone by, his mother's alarm about him was stirred afresh.

The second alarm indeed seemed to be as baseless, and turned out to be as evanescent, as the first. It was occasioned by a convivial meeting, in which at the close of the summer the local yacht club finished its sport for the season. Jamie Forbes, as an enthusiast in the sport, was of course bound to be present; and, for the quiet life of his home, it was naturally a late hour—it was, in fact, near midnight—when he returned. His father and mother, however, waited for him in the parlour. The father, amid fitful efforts to fix his attention on such scraps of the day's newspapers as he had not read before, was dozing in an easy chair by the fireside. But the mother, with her old anxiety growing as the night deepened, had been unable for some time to settle to any occupation of body or mind. Every few minutes saw her at the window peering into the darkness, and then returning with an expression on her face of disappointment and increased anxiety. At length her ear, quickened by the strain of attention, caught the sound of a footstep approaching the gate; and while the gate was still creaking on its hinges, she had reached the front door, and was standing on the outer step to welcome her son.

"O mother!" he called in a tone half of sympathy, half of reproach, "this is too bad. I told you I was taking the key wi' me: so I could let myself in without troubling anybody. There was no need for you to sit up."

"We thought it would be rather dull for you to be coming home and finding the house all quiet, wi' everybody in bed."

"I'm vexed to think o' you being kept out o' bed so long," said the young man, with a genuine concern in his voice, as on entering the parlour he saw his father.

"Hillo!" the father exclaimed, rousing himself with a yawn, while he glanced at his watch, "it's later than I thought."

"Well, father," said Jamie, "if I had had any idea that you and mother were going to wait up, I would have come home long ago. The fact is, it was getting gey tiresome before ten o'clock. I rose to leave them, but Mr. Nicoll whispered to me, 'Just wait a minute, and we'll see Dr. Todd home.' It was no easy matter, I can tell you, to get the doctor away. He was beginning to forget himself, and he got quite rampagious when we spoke o' breaking up. But Mr. Nicoll—— My! he's got a fine way wi' a man in that state. He chaffed him, he wheedled

him, he spoke seriously to him, and at last he coaxed him to come away. It was just as well we waited. For when we got outside, the doctor was that blin'-fou', I doubt if he would ever have found the road home; and he was getting that silly about the legs we had just to oxter him, and carry him along the best way we could——. My!" added Jamie, rubbing his left arm, "the doctor's no wee wecht. This arm's still sore wi' trying to hold him up."

"Ah!" said Mr. Forbes, "I'm sorry to hear that about the doctor. But I'm no surprised. I don't see how we can depend on him at the mill any longer. At the accident to that poor lassie the other day he could na be got till they sent to the change-house, and there they found him in Luckie Brown's parlour wi' a lot o' drouthy cronies."

"You didn't tell me, George, about the accident," said Mrs. Forbes. "I would have gone to see the poor girl. How is she getting on?"

"I daresay, goodwife," replied Mr. Forbes, "the poor thing will be real pleased to see you. But it turned out to be not at all so serious as we feared. At first I thought the lassie would have to lose her arm, and I didn't know what to do: for the doctor's hand was that unsteady, I would na have trusted

him to lance a boaling finger, for fear o' cutting it off."

There was a moment's pause, and then Jamie took up a moralising vein. "I'm sure," he said, "if anybody was tempted to be a drunkard, he would have been completely cured if he had seen what I've seen to-night. There was Dr. Todd—a fine fellow when he's all right, wi' gentlemanly manners and a first-rate education. There he was, talking the silliest drivel, and everybody laughing at him. But he was na so bad, after all, as young Fullarton—Sir James' son. They say he gets perfectly mad whenever he tastes liquor, and can't stop till he makes a beast o' himself. I'm sure the sight o' him to-night was enough to give any man a scunner at drinking all his life."

"I hope it 'll have that effect on you, Jamie," said his mother.

"Never fear me, mother," was the reply. "I can't comprehend how any man can be so feckless as not to throw off a habit like that."

"I can't comprehend it, either," said the father.

"In fact," added the son, "I'd almost like to have some habit that I wanted to get rid o', just to show how easily I could throw it off."

"Jamie," said his mother earnestly, with a sad

smile, "ye'd better no try the experiment. It's rather dangerous."

"Well, mother," was the reply, "if I ever thought o' making the experiment, it would na be wi' a disgusting habit like drinking."

"I daresay," remarked the father, "your mother's right, Jamie. It's an old proverb that a man canna play wi' fire without getting himself burnt. However," he added, "it's time for bed long ago."

And so the three parted for the night. The mother was largely relieved of her anxiety; for, though her son had followed the general custom by taking a share of the liquor that had been going at the dinner, the evident moderation of his indulgence, coupled with his disgust at the excess which he had witnessed, seemed to imply that there was little danger of his falling a victim to intemperance. A deeper insight into character, and the laws by which it is formed, might indeed have quickened, instead of calming, her anxiety. For, though the confidence of her son in his strength of will apparently exceeded that of his father, it obviously originated from a very different source. The father had been trained by the admirable discipline of regulated industry, and habits of regularity had thus woven themselves so intricately into the very fibre of his being, that it

was simply impossible to represent to himself the helpless state of mind which allows life to be dissipated in the irregularities of intemperance. But the son's confidence in himself was based on no real strength of will. It arose from mere ignorance of the toil and struggle through which strength of will must be tested before it can be won—or lost. His very confidence, therefore, instead of proving his power, turned out to be his weakness—a weakness under which his will gave way amid the triumph of an imperious physical craving.

This triumph was not, of course, the work of a single malign day. The healthy vigour of youth cannot degenerate into the morbid debility of an incurable mania, except through a long course of enfeeblement. In this case, indeed, the tragedy was swift enough. In less than six years it had run its course. But no narrative can give more than a very faint picture of the suffering that may be compressed into the few years of such a tragedy—suffering not for the victim alone, but for all who are connected with him in any way.

With the confidence which Jamie Forbes had expressed in the power of his will, it is not surprising that he should not feel called to take any precautions against the encroachments of a growing habit. He

followed without hesitation the customs of the society in which he lived. He even joined unreluctantly—joined at times with a certain zest—in convivial meetings at which there is apt to be a good deal of excess on the part of some of the revellers. In all this it seemed at times as if there was a certain juvenile bravado, as if he wished to show how freely he could tamper with temptation without losing his power of self-restraint. Even the first nausea in which the stomach pleaded piteously against its ill-treatment, and the first headaches in which the brain had to atone for its weakness, produced, for a time at least, such a revolt as seemed to confirm his overweening confidence in the power of his will to arrest at any time the growth of an evil habit. It is marvellous to note how this confidence buoys up at times the most helpless slave of intemperance, just as in some fatal diseases there is often an illusive hope of recovery on to the very last.

But the confidence which deluded Jamie Forbes did not long blind his mother. As she had dreaded from the first, she soon came to see clearly enough that she was doomed to witness in her son the same mournful wreck which had filled her with anguish over the tragic fate of her brother. She detected, in fact, symptoms of a growing indulgence, the meaning

of which was very evident to her long before they had excited any suspicion in her husband's mind. Unfortunately, therefore, the first flagrant excess of his son came upon the father with the overpowering shock of an unexpected horror.

One evening in the early spring, Jamie had been invited to a supper party at Dr. Todd's. The place was ominous to Mrs. Forbes, and she could not avoid a kindly word of warning to her son as he went out. "Well, mother," was the reply of his usual confidence, "I told you what I thought o' the doctor's conduct at the dinner last year. I don't think there's much danger o' my making such an exhibition o' myself to-night."

"I'm afraid, Jamie, ye're sometimes just too confident. It's worth while to keep in mind what the Bible tells us, 'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.'"

"Well, well, mother, you may surely trust me for one night. I'll take heed no to fall into that sort o' quagmire."

Two or three hours passed, and Mr. and Mrs. Forbes were sitting again at their parlour fireside, as they had done about six months before, waiting for the return of their son. The hour was not late, but Mr. Forbes was already beginning to doze over the

periodicals that he had picked up one after another from the table, when he was startled from his drowsiness by the approach of several feet on the road, that seemed to be shuffling in irregular steps, and of several voices whose noisy tones might be taken to indicate that they were not under their usual control. Listening for a moment, his ear caught the sharp click of the latch on the iron gate, and he rose at once to go to the door, wondering who could be coming to visit in such unceremonious fashion at such an unceremonious hour. On opening the door, however, he caught no sign of anything but the still shuffling footsteps and the still boisterous voices now retreating up the road. Concluding that some mistake had been made, he was about to close the door again, when his wife, who was standing by his side, held his arm and said, "George, that's Jamie."

"Where?" he exclaimed; and, as he passed out to the front step, his eye, which had by this time adjusted itself to the darkness, caught sight of a human form tumbled all in a heap on the gravel walk. "What can the matter be wi' the puir laddie?" continued he, as he hurried out, "he must have been taken wi' some sudden illness."

"It's worse than that," was the mother's whispered

reply: and before her words were fully uttered, the shocking significance of what he saw smote the strong man like a blow that shook the very foundations of his life.

"Never mind to say anything to him just now," continued Mrs. Forbes. "We must get him off to bed as quietly as we can."

"But I'm afraid I canna help him—I'm powerless myself—this has ta'en away my breath—I never felt like this before." Such was Mr. Forbes' reply, jerked out in spasms of breathlessness.

It was well that Mrs. Forbes could not in the darkness see her husband's features, else a new dread might have been added to the horror of her son's fall. But feeling all that horror herself, and knowing that it had come upon her husband altogether unexpectedly, she was not at all alarmed by the fact that the sudden shock had stunned him for the moment. She waited, therefore, for a few seconds while she saw him stand in silent and perplexed anguish over his son. But fortunately the paralysis of intoxication, which had thrown the young man helpless on the ground, was but transitory. He soon recovered sufficient self-possession to scramble to his feet, to stagger to the door, and, with a grip on the rail, to drag himself upstairs to his room,

where, with his mother's help, he got undressed and tumbled into bed.

Mrs. Forbes then returned to the parlour, where she found her husband, half-sitting, half-lying, on the sofa, with a look of weary sorrow such as she had never seen on his face before. He roused himself as she entered, rose and put his arm around her, and drew her close to his side. "You maun excuse me, goodwife," he said, "for throwing all this sad work on you. I know it's me that should have done it. I'm ashamed to let anything unman me like this. But the truth is, I felt that weak, I don't think I could have carried myself upstairs, let alone Jamie, and the sight o' him in that state would have fairly killed me."

"I'm real vexed for you, George," was the wife's reply. "It maun be hard for you to bear, for it's all new to you. But I've gone through it all before, and I'm afraid I'm to blame for bringing this trouble on you. I sometimes think it maun be something in the Freer blood. It's just extraordinary, the likeness o' Jamie to his uncle Tom. It gives me a start at times, as if he was my brother, and no my son. I've heard that Tom was real like his grandfather, and they say the old man gied his family sore

distress by his habits. My father used to say it was that made him a teetotaller all his life."

"Hoot-toot, goodwife," said the husband, "ye maunna distress yourself wi' thae fancies. If either o' us is to blame, surely it's me for no looking better after my own son. I canna understand how I never thought of it before——. But," he added, "maybe we've seen the worst o't. I wadna be surprised if this is a lesson to Jamie, to keep him steady all his life. At any rate, we'll hope for the best."

With this faint hope the husband and wife retired, but not to sleep. The shock was too powerful a stimulus to brain and nerve to give way before the common sedative of the day's fatigue. For both the long night dragged in painfully protracted sleeplessness, while each endeavoured, by an assumed stillness, to guard against interrupting the imagined slumbers of the other. The sleeplessness of Mr. Forbes was another novelty in his experience of life. Owing to the singular regularity and temperance of his habits, the day, spent in energetic industry, brought a wholesome fatigue at its close with the uniformity of a natural law; so that he had never known that loss of invigorating sleep which is a common penalty of irregular habits. He rose, therefore, in the morning with very unusual sensa-

tions; and these continued, with their distracting effects, to disturb the occupations of the whole day. But all this interruption in the even tenour of his life was attributed by him to the unwonted excitement of the preceding night. Neither he nor his wife ever dreamt that it could be the first manifestation of a lurking organic weakness which might double the tragedy that was beginning to darken their lives.

It seemed indeed as if the hope which Mr. Forbes had expressed the night before were going to be realised. All day long Jamie lay in bed, drinking down to its bitterest dregs the cup he had brewed for himself. His pitiable plight would have touched any heart with compassion too deeply to allow the addition of reproach at the time. Once or twice, indeed, his mother questioned within herself whether it was not moral cowardice that restrained her from speaking to him about his fall, whether her duty did not call upon her to suppress her pity. But the diviner instinct gained the day. And it had the right, for it formed the wiser guide. When God is teaching, it is better that man should be silent; and Mrs. Forbes soon found that Jamie had been learning far more by her silence than she could have taught him by any words of hers.

During the earlier part of the day the anguish of

his spirit was, to a large extent, merely a natural, though intense, regret for the physical suffering which he had brought upon himself. But as that suffering passed away, he began to feel more vividly the moral shame of his own disgrace, as well as a generous sympathy with the shame which his father and mother had to bear. These nobler sentiments found vent at last with the return of comparative physical comfort. Late in the afternoon, his mother had brought him a cup of tea carefully prepared with her own hand. He drank it with such relish that he was offered another, and at once with eagerness accepted the offer. Then before he laid his head down again, his mother smoothed his pillow, and, as he lay down, tucked him in as she had been wont to do when he was a child. All the memories of the motherly love that had watched over his childhood poured in upon his soul, and burst open the flood-gates of pent-up emotion. "Mother," he said, in a voice breaking away into a sob, "mother, forgive me, and I'll make up for this——"; but the voice refused to say more.

"Jamie," was the mother's gentle reply, "the only way you can make up for this is by taking care that it 'll never happen again. You can aye be sure of being forgiven then."

She sat down by the bedside, and took his hand in hers. Their hands lay clasped on the coverlet, but neither spoke, for the fitful sobs of the penitent lad convinced the mother that he was still not in a state for conversation. She rose after some minutes, when he seemed to have recovered calm, and said, "I'll go now, Jamie, for I hear your father coming in for tea. You'll have to try and get a good sleep, and you'll be all right to-morrow."

She then left him to the divine voices of reproof and warning and entreaty, which are ever pleading with the human soul, and plead with us most earnestly just at those moments when we begin to catch their tones once more after they have been silenced for a time by the clamours of passion. Gradually the voices of reproof and warning lost the sternness of their tones, and became mellowed by a dominant note of gentle entreaty. This genial influence soothed the penitent at last into a state of calm, which passed over into peaceful slumber.

For weeks after this, Jamie's life was rendered serener than it had ever been before by the unusual effort of honest industry in which he sought protection from the inroad of remorseful memories, as well as from the craving for that morbid excitement to which those memories were due. His father had

begun to look on the incident, which had created so much horror at the time, as a ridiculous escapade of youthful folly, which now appeared in a comi l aspect at times, and faded away from memory in a good-humoured smile. Even the mother was being soothed into the conviction that her son would never forget the lesson he had drawn from his one startling experience of excess. But not even she, with all the recollections of her brother's tragic doom, seemed to realise the dread force of the craving with which her son would be called to contend. Was she perhaps right in her conjecture, that the craving was hereditary, and that the likeness of nephew and uncle and their common ancestor might be' ty the presence of similar nervous conditions, originating an irresistible craving for alcoholic excitement?

The long daylight of the northern summer offers powerful attractions for the young and vigorous to enjoy themselves in outdoor amusements till forced to retire for the night's rest. But the long, cold nights of winter, as well as of late autumn and early spring, force the northern nations to seek the enjoyment of evening leisure within their homes. When, therefore, the summer had gone by, young Forbes seemed to miss the healthy excitement of boating and other outdoor sports. He became restless amid

the comparatively tame quiet of the long evenings at home. Gradually he began to seek a more stirring social life outside, and inevitably he fell into company in which he was tempted to give up the practice of total abstinence, to which he had adhered during the summer. As the winter advanced, it became evident that the effect of alcohol on his brain and nerves was of a peculiarly pernicious kind. Though he did not come home at night in the state of helplessness which had been the effect of his first excess, the after-effects of indulgence were even more alarming. Often, after being but a few minutes in his office at the mill, his nervous agitation became such that he was unable to remain still, his handwriting lost the firm stroke of youth and manhood, and showed the wavering lines of paralysed age, while his brain lost all its tension, and became incapable of application to the simplest problems of his work. In such a state the craving for the momentary relief of a stimulant was simply irresistible; and no warning from the deplorable aggravation of his disease had any effect in deterring from a renewed recourse to the imaginary cure. Before the winter had passed, it was pretty generally known throughout Arderholm that Jamie Forbes had become "rather unsteady" in his habits.

CHAPTER XIII.

Shadows of Evening.

"Each fibre of his frame was weak
Weak all the animal within;
But, in its helplessness, grew mild
And gentle as an infant child
An infant that has known no sin."

Wordsworth, "Peter Bell."

Two or three years after Mike Sullivan had begun his apprenticeship in the carpenter's shop at the mill, Dugald M'Killop happened to be in the office one morning consulting his employers. As he was leaving, Mr. Forbes said, "By the bye, Dugald, they're wanting old Sullivan over at the house for a little this morning. If you see him about the yard, you might send him over."

"I'm sorry, sir," was the reply, "he has na been here since Saturday, and Mike tells me he's real poorly the day. I'm feared he's breaking up, puir body."

"I'm sorry to hear that," said Mr. Forbes. "If you can spare Mike for half-an-hour, you might send

him instead: and," he added after a moment's reflection, "if you're not particularly busy this afternoon, you might go round and see the old man after you get your dinner. You can stay and chat with him for an hour. It'll maybe cheer him up a bit."

"And," added Mr. Nicoll, "let us know if we can do anything for the poor old [illegible]."

"I'll do that, Mr. Nicoll," replied Dugald; "and thank you, Mr. Forbes, for your leave to bide [illegible] hmm. I was ettlin' tae gang roon that way [illegible] ne [illegible]-hoo. But, of course, I could na have muckle [illegible] for a [illegible]."

Dugald left the office and gave Mr. Forbes' message to Mike, who was now all unwilling to interrupt his lessons at cards during in order to [illegible] the opportunity of a [illegible] with Jazzy the maid [illegible].

[illegible] noon, as soon as he had washed his d[illegible] and went round to the hut where [illegible] Mike was just starting to retu[illegible]

[illegible] hae tae look efter the work up by till I co[illegible]," said Dugald to him. "The maister's gie[illegible] me leave to bide here a wee, and I'll maybe no be back for an hoor."

"Oh, Mr. M'Killop," exclaimed Mike's mother, as

she took up a chair and brought it to Dugald, after wiping it with her apron, "I'm real glad to see ye. The auld man's been wearyin' tae hae a crack wi' ye."

"Noo, Mrs. Sullivan," said Dugald, "I think I can look efter your guidman and let ye get oot for a wee while. Ye maun hae been keepit geyan close tae the hoose since he took ill. Ye'll be the better o' the fresh air, and it's a fine caller day."

"It's real kind o' ye, Mr. M'Killop," was the reply, "ye've been aye a guid frien'. Sae I'll just tak' the chance tae gang oot and look efter twa-three things. I'll no be lang awa'."

"Tak' your time, mistress. Ye're safe to bide an hoor at ony rate."

The old woman had no finery—nothing at all in fact—to put on. So she was gone before Dugald had quite finished speaking. Dugald then turned to the patient, who lay on a very untidy bed amid very untidy surroundings. "I'm real sorry, Sullivan, to see you laid up," he said.

"Aye, Dugald, it's no like me. I never mind being in ma bed in the daytime afore, except maybe on a Sawbath or a fast day, whan I had nae wark tae tak' me oot."

"What d'ye reckon's the maitter wi' ye?" asked Dugald.

"Weel, the doctor says he's no very sure, but I ken fine mysel'."

"Hoo's that?" asked Dugald again.

"Weel, d'ye mind last Saturday, what an awfu' het day it was? We had gey hard wark that morning, first piling wud in the yaird for your shop, than bringing oot a' that stuff and fillin' ae cairt-load efter anither to send it aff by the efternoon train. We was a' sweitin' like pownies, and of coorse we was awfu' dry. Weel, there was a big can o' watter staunin' there, and I saw the lads aye drink, drinkin' at it, as if they could never get aneuch. I dinna mind whan I ever tasted watter afore. So thinks I tae mysel', 'it canna dae muckle harm that drink. If it was guid whuskey they were drinkin', lang or this they would have been a' roarin' fou, or maybe deid drunk. I'll gang and pree't just tae see what it tastes like.' And as ill-luck would hae't, I liftit the can tae my mou', and took a guid wacht o' the watter. Weel, I maun alloo it sloaken't my drouth at the time; but, oh man! it was just like cauld airn in my stammach. I sometimes think it's lying there yet. At ony rate, I've never been weel sinsyne."

"If that's a' that's wrang," said Dugald, half

inclined to smile notwithstanding old Sullivan's solemnity, "ye'll sune come roon again."

"I'm no sae sure o' that. I feel geyan bad sometimes, as if it was gaun tae be the end o' me. The doctor disna ken what tae dae, and I dinna ken mysel'. I thocht a guid glass o' whuskey would maybe pit me a' richt; but whan my auld wimman poored it oot, the very smell o't stawed me like brock: sae she had just tae tak' it aff hersel'. I maun be gey ill, Dugald, whan I've gaen aff my whuskey like that. I dinna ken what's tae keep life in me noo ava."

"But," Dugald urged, "ye're no looking sae ill's a' that. Ye maunna gie up hope yet."

"It's ither folk's giein up hope aboot me. Wha d'ye think was here this mornin'? He's cam twice tae see me. The pairish minister! What's this is his name?"

"Mr. Cuthbertson."

"Aye, Cuthbertson. That's it. I mind it was a lang name, and I could na get my tongue roon't. Aweel, Dugald, ministers dinna gang tae veesit a body till he's deein."

"Hoots, man," Dugald explained; "a minister can surely come tae see ye whan ye're noweel, just as

I've come the day, tae hae a crack wi' ye and cheer ye up."

"I never kent that afore," replied Sullivan; "but ye see I'm no used tae veesits frae ministers. At ony rate, Mr. Cuthbertson thinks I'm deein."

"What maks ye think that?" asked Dugald.

"Weel, ye see, whan he was here the day, he prayed the Lord no tae separate my soul frae my body till He had separated my soul frae sin. I mind his very words. Hoosomever, Dugald, it was real guid o' him tae come and see an auld sinner like me. I never darkened the door o' his kirk. And d'ye ken what he said? He tellt me he would hae come tae veesit me lang syne; but he thocht, whan I didna gang tae the Pairish Church, that I maun belang tae the Free Kirk. Losh me! I could hardly keep frae affrontin' mysel' by lauchin' oot in his face. Me belang tae the Free Kirk! I never belanged tae ony kirk that ever I heard tell o'."

"But," Dugald asked, "what kirk did your faither and mither belang tae?"

"I canna tell that. Maybe they were Catholics, for onything I ken. But it's a' the same tae me: for I could na tell ye the difference atween ae religion and anither, though it was tae save my life."

"But," Dugald asked again, "d'ye no mind o' your faither and mither takin' ye tae ony kirk?"

The patient looked round and asked, "Is there onybody listenin'?"

"No," replied Dugald; "there's naebody in the hoose but oor twa sels."

"Then I'll tell ye what I've never tell't tae a leevin' sowl. I never saw my faither, that I mind o'. Maybe he was deid afore I was born. And I dinna mind muckle aboot my mither neither. Whan I was a wee chappie, I maun hae been in some hoose like an Orphan's Home or an Infirmary, or something o' that sort. Weel, ae day I was lyin' in my bit bed,—maybe I was noweel at the time; but I'm no just sure, and it disna maitter. At ony rate a leddy cam' in and was talkin' tae the auld body that minded us bairns. I jalouse they thocht I was sleepin' and didna hear them. But I heard the leddy say that my mither had died that day in the jail. Weel, as I was saying, I was a gey wee chap at the time, but I had gumption eneuch tae ken it was maybe just as weel for me no tae hear ony mair aboot my mither: sae I've never speer't aboot her sinsyne. I mind mither tellin' me that faither had gane tae some far awa' place in foreign pairts, that they ca' Botany Bay, but he deid on the voyage.

Sae I kent there was nae use speerin' efter him neither."

"That was a hard beginning for ye, Sullivan," said Dugald, in a tone of genuine sympathy. Then after a brief pause, he added, "But efter ye were grown up, did ye never think o' gaun tae ony kirk yoursel'?"

"Oh aye. Noo and than, whan I had guid wages for a wee, maybe clawtin' and soopin' the streets, or shoolin' coal, or siclike jobs, I begood tae think I micht be a wee daicenter, and gang tae the kirk like ither folk. But, man! Dugald, I sune fan oot that ye canna gang tae the kirk except ye hae daicent claes, and I never had mair nor ae coat tae my back a' my life. I did gang twa-three times tae a kirk, or raither I tried twa-three different kirks. But, losh me! gin I had been a seven-fit giant or a wee bit manikie let oot o' the shows, they could na hae glowred at me mair. As if they was a' wonnerin' what in the world brocht a puir ragged body like me amang gentle folks in their braw Sunday claes."

"Man! Sullivan," Dugald observed, "there's mony a guid-hearted body would hae been gled tae gie ye a daicent coat tae your back, if they had kent ye wanted tae gang tae the kirk."

"But what guid would it hae dune, Dugald? I

did my best, but I could na mak' heid or tail o' what the ministers were saying. Whiles they would speak aboot holy Moses or Jesus, but what did I ken aboot thae folk? I've heard coorse men and bardy women name them when they were sweirin', and I aye had a notion it wasna richt to speak disrespectfu' aboot them that way: but I would need tae learn a hantle mair nor I ken to unnerstaun' what the ministers was saying."

"It's an awfu' pity, Sullivan, ye never learnt tae read."

"It is that, Dugald. But I'm real gled that oor Mike's had a guid eddication and's learnin' a trade. Man, if I had been a scholar and a tradesman like him, I micht hae been a joined member o' a kirk, and maybe had my Sunday claes like the best o' them. But I had a hard time o't when I was a laddie. Whiles I wonner hoo I ever pull't through it a'. I never had ony raiglar wages—naethin' but a thripenny bit or a saxpence or whiles a shillin' for an odd job noo and than—till I daundered tae Arderholm, and got the job I'm at here."

"It was weel ye cam' tae sic a guid maister."

"It was that, Dugald. I could na hae fa'en on a nicer place. Folks hae been unco kind tae me. I canna help thinkin' it was something bye-ordinar for

the minister to come and speer efter me the way he's dune. It's gien me a better opinion o' the ministers. Would ye believe 't, Dugald? I used tae think they were a set o' fine gentlemen that got big pay for gey little wark."

"That's what some folk would threip doon oor throat yet, when they talk aboot things they dinna ken."

"'Deed ye're richt there, Dugald. D'ye mind lang Tam—Tam Murdoch, the cobbler, I mean—that leeved up at the Loan-end?"

"I mind him weel."

"Aweel, he's deid and gane noo; sae we'll no say ony ill aboot the chiel. But he was gey coorse; at ony rate, he had an ill tongue in his heid whiles. I've heard folk say he was an atheist or an infidel or something o' that sort; but I dinna weel ken what it means, and I'm no very sure they kent theirsels. I jaloose it was because he was aye talking against the Bible, trying tae mak' folk lauch at it."

"Tam kent naething aboot the Bible," exclaimed Dugald, with a warmth of tone that contrasted with his usually quiet manner. "I don't believe he ever read it half through."

"I used tae think that mysel'," Sullivan continued, "when I heard him arguin' wi' folk like you that

ken's the Bible. But, ye see, ae book's the same as anither tae me. Sae I could na argue wi' Tam, I could na tell whether he was richt or wrang——. But what's this I was gaun tae say? Oh aye, it was aboot Tam and the ministers. Weel, whan Mr. Cuthbertson cam' tae the pairish, I heard Tam talkin' tae a wheen o' his cronies aboot the new minister ae day. 'I'm tellt,' says he, 'the steepend's nigh four hunner pound noo since the glebe's feu't. That's mair nor a pound a day. Aweel,' says he, 'what does the minister dae for 't a'? Preaches twa sermons on the Sawbath day; and I'm tellt,' says he, 'his sermons is unco short—no half-an-hoor a piece. That's seven pound for ae hoor's wark on the Sawbath day, and than he can play himself or dae onything he likes a' the rest o' the week. By George,' says Tam, 'gin the minister was tae gang and sell his sermons, he would wait a lang while afore onybody would offer him three pound ten a piece for them.' Of coorse Tam's cronies—some o' them mair nor half-fou—buit tae lauch at what he was saying, as if it was a fine joke at the minister; and I didna ken better nor tae lauch alang wi' them——. But I ken better noo, Dugald," added Sullivan after a pause. "There's oor minister gaun roon tae veesit a' the noweel folks in his pairish, and he comes even

tae me that never gaed near his kirk. I'm thinkin', even if he had naething else tae dae, that'll keep him geyan thrang maist o' his time. And Tam thocht he had only an hoor's wark a' the week!"

"Maybe," said Dugald, "if Lang Tam or you or me had to get twa sermons ready for ilka Sawbath day, we'd fin' that we wanted mair nor ae week for the job."

"Ods! Dugald, I never thocht o' that. Hoo could ony common body like me get up and preach for an hoor—aye, or for a quarter o' an hoor—even if we got workin' at it a' the week afore? I was thinkin' aboot that the day, efter the minister was here. At ony rate, it was aboot the bonny prayer he put up. I could na help wonnerin' hoo ony body can learn tae speak sic bonny words. They're just like an auld sang that ye used tae hear whan ye were a bairn, and it mak's ye maist greet whan ye hear't again noo. Weel, d'ye ken what I was thinkin', Dugald? Thinks I tae mysel', it maun just be every man tae his trade. There's Sandie Gibb, noo, doon at the Red Smiddy. I daursay Mr. Cuthbertson wad mak' a puir haun at shoein' a horse, compared wi' Sandie; but than, Sandie could na haud a caunle tae the minister at a prayer."

Dugald M'Killop had sufficient knowledge of human nature to see that old Sullivan was enjoying a genuine relief in finding a kindly listener to whom he could unburden himself without restraint. Dugald had also sufficient tact to let the old man talk on with no more interruption than was necessary. He saw, moreover, that the patient was in good hands for the treatment of his spiritual wants as well as of his bodily ailments. Accordingly, when Mrs. Sullivan returned just after her husband had finished his comparison of the minister and the smith, Dugald rose and left, with a promise that he would call again.

The news of Sullivan's illness soon spread through the village, and excited a good deal of generous pity. The old man, though an excessive toper, was yet so regular in his excess that he was rarely, if ever, in a state of helpless intoxication; and as his oddities of talk and manner had made him one of the characters of the place, he was generally regarded with a good deal of kindly feeling. When his illness became known, therefore, many a tempting dish was sent down from Fernie Brae as well as from Burnside, in hope of recalling a vanished appetite. But they were all passed over to Mike and his mother, who had thus a chance of enjoying delicacies such as they

had never dreamt of among the costliest gratifications of the table.

The doctor attending old Sullivan was not the man whose dissipated life had left a lurid reflection on the life of his young friend, Jamie Forbes. As must have been anticipated, Dr. Todd had long ago vanished from Arderholm. Soon after that he had vanished from the earth altogether. His successor, Dr. MacBean, was a man of a very different type. Born in a Highland parish, in which Gaelic had been his mother tongue, he still retained, with the cultured speech of an educated man, that pleasing intonation and that tendency to sharpening of the flat consonants which commonly betray the Celt in speaking English. After a good school education in Inverness, he had gone to Edinburgh to study medicine. There he came under the personal influence of Mr. Downes, a clergyman with whom we shall become better acquainted in next chapter. He was particularly attracted by Mr. Downes' work among the poor of his parish, and rendered him often valuable assistance in that work by cheerfully giving medical services to many who were too poor to pay professional fees. Dr. Todd had left Arderholm about the time when Dr. MacBean graduated; and Mr. Nicoll, who had repeatedly heard Mr. Downes speak

of his young medical friend, wrote at once to secure him for the vacant position. The new doctor had thus come to Arderholm with a high idea of life in general as well as of a medical man's work in particular. He had taken a leading part in starting a Young Men's Christian Association in the place. He had stirred up the people to a more intelligent regard for sanitary laws. It was, in fact, impossible to be long among the people of Arderholm or of Inverarder without coming upon some indication of the influence for good which the young doctor was quietly exerting in many directions.

As old Sullivan himself had indicated in his talk with Dugald M'Killop, Dr. MacBean had not formed a hopeful view of his case. "The fact is," said the doctor, when questioned about his patient, "the poor fellow has never been in the habit of taking sufficient nourishment. He has been trying to make whiskey take the place of nourishing food; and the constant irritation of the coats of his stomach with alcohol has led to such a degeneration of the organ, that I fear it can't perform its functions any longer. There's no use trying to tempt him with delicacies. He simply can't digest anything. He tells me his stomach turns even against his whiskey. I'm afraid

the end's not very far off. It's but a question of a few days."

The doctor's prognostication turned out to be correct. His patient's illness lasted but a fortnight. For a day or two at the end life became barely perceptible, and at last vanished quietly altogether.

The illness of old Sullivan had drawn the attention of many to the state of the hut in which he had been living for years. Dr. MacBean declared it to be unfit for human habitation, and he induced the authorities to insist on its being abandoned. But in his labour for general sanitary reform he did not forget the interests and the needs of individuals, and he felt it but just to try and make some provision for Mike and his mother before they were turned out of the old hut. As Mr. Nicoll and his wife had been a great help to him in many ways before, he went to them on this occasion. It was evening, and Mrs. Nicoll was enjoying her piano, while her husband was enjoying his book.

"I'm sorry to disturb you," said the doctor, as he was ushered in and shook hands with his two friends, "but I came to speak about widow Sullivan and her son. I've got that wretched hut of theirs condemned, and I would like to see them in a decent sort of house. Now, there's a cottage just beside Dugald

M'Killop's. It's a wee bit place—just a but and a ben, but it's big enough for them. The 'but'—the kitchen—has a bed in the wall. It's quite open, however, and just opposite the door; so it should be kept fresh enough. I suppose the old woman would prefer it; it would always be warmer: and her son could have the room—the 'ben'—for his bed. I've just been up to see Dugald. It's no hard to reach that good fellow's heart at any time, especially when I try the Gaelic. But it wasn't necessary in this case. I find he takes an extraordinary interest in young Sullivan."

"Yes," said Mr. Nicoll, "it was Dugald induced me to give Mike a trial as an apprentice. I doubted at the time whether he would ever make anything o' the callan. He seemed such an unpromising laddie. But Dugald was anxious to give the poor fellow a chance o' saving himself from his degrading surroundings, and he's going to be successful. Mike's turning out a fine chap."

"I'm glad to hear that," said the doctor. "It interests me all the more. Well, I was going to say that Dugald's daughter grew interested too. She said if she could get Mike and his mother up to that cottage, she would try and get the old woman to keep

the place tidy, and would help her to make things nicer for Mike."

"Now," said Mrs. Nicoll, "it's my time to speak. I was in the Sullivans' hut one day, when the old man was ill; but I simply couldn't go back. There's nothing in the miserable place that's worth removing. The best thing you can do is to burn up the house and all its belongings. James," she went on, turning to her husband, "there's that small iron bedstead in the closet upstairs. There's no use of leaving it lumbering there. Would you object to my giving it to Mike?"

"No; certainly not, goodwife," replied the husband. "Give him it with mattress, pillows, blankets, and all the necessaries."

"Wait a bit," said Mrs. Nicoll, with a quiet but very hearty laugh. "You're going on faster than I intended. However, I think you gentlemen had better leave the whole of the arrangements to Mrs. Forbes and me. Women understand these things better than men."

"Agreed," exclaimed the doctor; and Mr. Nicoll chimed in, "All right."

"I'd like to do something too for Mike," continued Mrs. Nicoll. "It's been very pleasant to watch the improvement of that young fellow, even amid all the

drawbacks of that horrible hut. Mike's getting a higher idea of tidiness and comfort; and I can't help thinking, doctor, that implies that his whole ideal of life is rising."

"I'm glad to hear you say that, Mrs. Nicoll," replied the doctor. "Often when I'm weary and disheartened with my work, and wondering what's the good of mending broken bones and trying to cure diseased flesh, I begin to think, 'well, soul and body are not separate; they're mysteriously intertwined: and maybe when we improve the bodily life, we may bring about, in some cases at least, an improvement in the higher life at the same time.' But," he added, after a pause, "I was out at three this morning; and I want to get home early, as I don't know when I may be called out to-morrow again."

"Well, doctor," said Mrs. Nicoll, "it would hardly be kind to urge you to stay in these circumstances."

"But remember," added her husband, "we're always glad to see you, whenever you can drop in, even for a few minutes."

About a week after this conversation, Mike and his mother were established in their new home amid simple comforts which neither had known all their lives before. Next Sunday Mike appeared at church

in a coat which seemed to him good for some years' service yet, though it had been put aside in Mr. Nicoll's wardrobe as rather the worse for the wear. He was also adorned, for the first time in his life, with a linen shirt, which was carefully laid past in the evening, that it might do duty for several Sundays without requiring to be dressed afresh. His mother, even, was stimulated to some degree of tidiness by her new environment, though Margaret M'Killop found her patience sorely tried at times by the old woman's insensibility to dirt.

Only once did Mike experience any serious difficulty with his mother. Since the death of her husband, the various excitements through which she had passed seemed to have allayed the old craving for alcohol. But two or three weeks after she had entered her new quarters, when she was subsiding into the quiet routine of life again, the craving overmastered her one day. When Mike returned home in the evening, he detected at once the odour in the house. Under an uncontrollable excitement, he called out in a voice that sounded like a hoarse scream, "Mither, whaur's that damned whusky?"

The mother turned suddenly to her son, startled to see, what she had never realised before, that she had to deal no longer with a boy, but with a man in

the force of youthful health. Her eyes seemed fascinated by the new revelation bursting upon her in the unwonted passion of her son. She trembled in every limb more violently than she had ever made him quake before her irritable temper in the days of his boyhood. She could only in feeble voice stammer out the pitiful plaint. "Oh Mike, to think o' ye using bad language to your puir auld mither!"

"Mither," he retorted, while he stamped passionately on the floor, "it's the only time I ever spoke that word in my life; but there's nae ither word fit for sic deil's drink. Tell me at once, mither, whaur's that damned whuskey?"

As he spoke he came nearer to his mother. She saw that he was not to be trifled with, and, stricken with terror, she hobbled as fast as her rheumatic trembling limbs could carry her to the kitchen-cupboard, and brought out a bottle. As soon as Mike saw it, he snatched it out of her hands, hurried out at the back-door, emptied the contents of the bottle into the drain, and dashed the bottle itself to shivers on the ground. He then returned to the kitchen. His passion seemed to have vanished in its violent explosion, and he spoke with impressive calm, "Noo, mither, we'll say nae mair aboot this; but I warn ye, if ever ye bring drink into this hoose

again, ye'll never see my face ony mair. I'll gang awa' tae Glesca or London, or maybe till Amairica or Australia—at any rate, tae some place whaur ye'll never fin' me oot."

Again a pitiful plaint came from the old quavering voice, "O Mike, ye'll surely never leave your puir auld mither."

"I've tell't ye, mither, what I'll dae. I'll be kind tae ye as a son should be; I'll mak' ye mair comfortabler nor ye ever was a' your life afore. But I've gi'en ye fair warning what I'll dae, gin ye tak' tae drink again; and ye'll just ha'e yoursel' tae blame gin I leave ye. We'll say nae mair aboot it."

This ended the old woman's struggle. The terror of her son's anger and warning seemed to paralyse her old vice; and if the craving ever returned again, its force was never sufficient to overcome the dread of Mike's displeasure. The respect for her son was increased by the tenderness which he showed as he came to realise the merit of her victory. Margaret M'Killop soon found that this respect was the most powerful motive she could urge in her efforts at reform in Mrs. Sullivan's domestic methods. "Mike wouldna like that," or "This would please Mike,"—such were the pleas that Margaret came to use; and she found they were generally successful.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Priest of the Revolution.

"—— Turn to dearer matters,
Dear to the man that is dear to God;
How best to help the slender store,
How mend the dwellings, of the poor."
—*Tennyson*, "*To the Rev. F. D. Maurice.*"

When William Forbes last appeared in our history, he was enjoying the robust sports of a Scottish summer at the seaside, and displaying not a little vigour and valour as the result. When the summer was over, he proceeded, as had been planned, to the University with the somewhat indefinite purpose of being educated for the Church. For various reasons, Edinburgh had been chosen in preference to Glasgow, though the latter city was nearer to the young student's home. For we have now reached a time when an additional distance of fifty miles was reduced to the insignificance of a couple of hours' more travel; and it could scarcely therefore weigh in the balance against many other considerations.

One attraction which Edinburgh had for young Forbes as well as for his parents, was a happy arrangement offered for his lodging in the same house with a friend of Mr. Nicoll. The Rev. John Downes had been a fellow-student of Nicoll's; and though the two had drifted into different careers, they continued their old friendship with undiminished affection. The friendship was kept up, not only by correspondence, but by Downes occasionally seeking a brief holiday with his old fellow-student at Arderholm, where he was always welcomed as bringing a refreshing variation to the quiet life of the manager's household, while he evidently carried away with him to his city-work a fresh supply of physical and mental vigour. In the course of these visits Willie Forbes had enjoyed a great deal more of Mr. Downes' society than might have been expected from the disparity of their ages. For Mr. Downes was a great walker, especially when he was in the country; and Willie Forbes had been made well acquainted by Mr. MacVicar with the best roads and the best points of view to tempt a pedestrian in the neighbourhood of Arderholm. He was therefore often Mr. Downes' guide in his rambles, though at times the two were accompanied by the schoolmaster. In this way a kindly intimacy had grown up between

Willie and the Edinburgh minister. It was similar to the friendship which the boy had already formed with his teacher, and it was destined to exert a more powerful influence over his life. For, on learning that his boy-friend was coming to Edinburgh University, Downes proposed that he should come to live in the same house with him. Being a bachelor, Downes had not taken up house for himself, but lodged in the house of two elderly ladies, who sought in this way to add a little to a slender income. An arrangement was made, by which the young student from Arderholm was accommodated in the same house; and he had even the good fortune to enjoy the same comfortable quarters as long as he attended the University.

The influence of Downes over Forbes was beneficial as well as powerful in many ways. It was partly of course the stimulus and the guidance which a freshman receives from an older companion whose life has been enriched by the experience of an academical career. That stimulus and guidance were enhanced by the rare personality of the stimulating guide. But the whole influence of Downes took a peculiar direction from the novelty and the moral invigoration of the ideas by which his work was inspired. Of that work, indeed, naturally little had been said by

Downes to his young friend during their rambles in the country round Arderholm. Not only was Willie too much of a mere boy and too ignorant of city life to understand Downes' work or take an interest in it; but Downes usually courted the bracing influence of a complete change by occupying his mind with other subjects during his visits to the West. A faint hint, however, on the nature of his work, Downes was obliged to give incidentally to Willie on the morning of the first Sunday after his arrival in Edinburgh. The young fellow naturally proposed to go to church with his friend.

"No, no," was Downes' reply. "My good fellow, you don't know what your proposal means. Your father and mother would never forgive me if I took you to my church."

"Oh! you're mistaken, Mr. Downes. I'm sure they think I couldn't do better than go to your church; and I think that myself."

"No, no," Downes reiterated; "it would never do."

"Why?"

"Why! Do you know what sort of church mine is?"

"No," replied Willie. "But I suppose it's something like other churches."

"Well," Downes explained, "there's many a building not unlike my church. But it's the congregation I mean. I don't preach to a congregation of well-dressed people who are going to comfortable houses and plentiful dinners when the service is over. I don't know a person in the congregation that fashionable people would call well-dressed. Many of them, I am sure, haven't an article of clothing in the world but what they're wearing on their backs. Probably some of them don't know where they're to get a dinner at all, and very few have the faintest prospect of making a plentiful meal. Then I'm afraid the district you have to go through to get to the church would simply horrify you, if you've never seen or *smelt* it before."

Young Forbes felt that he could not press the subject further then, and other interests intervened to prevent him from returning to it for some time. But repeatedly in the course of conversation at table and at the fireside, incidents were related, remarks were made, which indicated more or less clearly the nature of the work which occupied the young minister. The studies, however, which occupied Forbes during the earlier years of his University life were so remote from the work of Downes that it was scarcely possible to expect the student to take any

vital interest in what the minister was doing. But his natural growth, under academic influences, gradually opened the student's mind to the larger questions of human life; and daily conversation with Downes turned his thoughts specially to the problems which the minister was seeking to solve. His intellectual sympathy, also, with Downes expanded as their companionship grew more intimate; and when, during the third year of his course, he took up the study of morals, he found himself entering with keen zest into the great outlook upon social morality, which Downes had first opened to his view.

Once in the early part of the session Forbes made a flying visit to Arderholm, as he had been accustomed to do in previous years. During such visits he always contrived to spend an hour or two at Fernie Brae, and on this occasion he followed his usual practice. As usual, also, his friends at Fernie Brae were particular in their inquiries about Mr. Downes. In the course of these inquiries Mr. Nicoll suddenly exclaimed, "By the way, Willie, do you know you were very near losing your friend Downes?"

"How?" inquired Willie, with surprise, and even alarm, in his tone.

"Well, one of the Glasgow churches was going to

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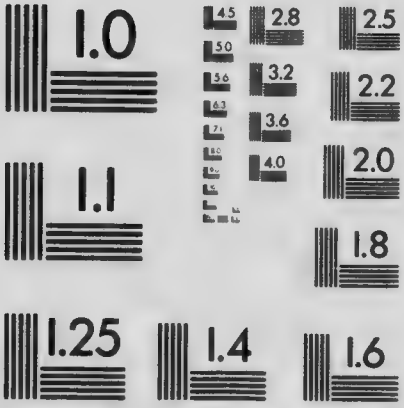

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call him the other day. They were offering double his present stipend, and the congregation—it's in the West-end—is, of course, made up of a very different class o' folk from those he's working among just now."

"And is he going to accept the call?"

"O no! Downes has some queer notions about his work. I suppose most men in his place would have snapt at the offer 'like a cock at a groset,' as Scotch folks say. But he got a private hint from a friend of what was going on, and he wrote to his friend at once to try and stop the proceedings, as he had made up his mind that he couldn't leave his present charge."

"Oh! I'm awfully glad," exclaimed Forbes, as if relieved from a burden of fear. Then, checking himself, he went on to explain, "I daresay it seems shamefully selfish in me, and I confess it was about myself I was thinking most when I said I was glad. But still——I think it would have been a mistake for Mr. Downes to have accepted the call."

"I'm not so sure that I can agree with you there."

"Why?"

"Well, I think Downes' preaching is full of the ideas about the Christian life that our rich folks ought to learn. The fact is, we've got fairly into a

new era. The world's life is dominated now by industrial ideas, and the Church hasn't got her teaching adjusted to the change yet. Most o' the ministers are hammering away at religious and moral ideas that were developed in the struggles of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—the time of the exodus from mediævalism, when the world had to wade through a terribly red sea. They don't realise the bearing of Christ's teaching on industrialism. The people, in fact, are left under the impression that industrial life can't be governed by Christian motives at all—that is, by the desire to be of loving service to one another. Competition, which is just un-Christian selfishness, is supposed to be the very life of trade, when we know that it is the death of all beneficent work among men."

"I'm not quite sure that I understand you, but I think that I have a glimpse of your meaning. Mr. Downes and I have been reading together Ruskin's articles in *Fraser* on 'Unto this last ——.' Of course you've seen them?"

"O yes," Mrs. Nicoll replied; "we've been reading them here too. Aren't they splendid?"

"I see," Mr. Nicoll added, "they've fallen like a series of bombshells into the camp of the old economists."

"Well," young Forbes continued, "they've led Mr. Downes and me into a lot of other reading together. We have gone through "Past and Present," and "Chartism," and "The Latter-Day Pamphlets."

"Hillo, Willie!" exclaimed Mr. Nicoll in a tone of good-humoured merriment, "you've been taking pretty strong food. But," he added, "it's wholesome, if you can digest it."

"I don't know about the digestion," said William; "for I don't think I would have read the books at all, and certainly I couldn't have got much benefit from them, without Mr. Downes' help. Of course, with his generous way, he tries to make me believe I'm doing him a favour by reading to him when he comes home tired in the evening. That has encouraged me to read the books; and then his explanations help me over difficulties, and often give a new interest to what I've read."

"I almost envy you getting the benefit of Downes' running commentary. I daresay it was illustrated by allusions to what he's seeing every day in his own work."

"That's what made me think it would have been a mistake for Mr. Downes to accept the Glasgow call. I was thinking partly of his poor people in

Edinburgh. I know that many of them would be in despair, if he was to leave them. He's the one helpful power in their lives. But I feel glad for Mr. Downes himself too. I'm not sure that he would be so happy with a wealthy, fashionable congregation as he is among the poor, and——"

He hesitated for a moment, when Mr. Nicoll broke in with a smile, "Out with it, old boy," as Sam Weller called to his father.

"Well," young Forbes went on, "I was going to say that I fear Mr. Downes wouldn't be so well appreciated, or so successful in any way. At any rate, the refusal gives me a higher opinion of him, though, if you had asked me an hour ago, I would probably have said that it was impossible to have a higher opinion of Mr. Downes than I had then."

"There's no one in this house, Willie, will differ with you in your opinion of Mr. Downes," was Mr. Nicoll's remark. His wife added, while her eye glistened with emotion, "No, indeed, Willie. Every time he comes here, I feel we're the better for it."

After some further conversation on different matters, William Forbes left his friends at Fernie Brae, and the following day he returned to Edinburgh. He had not been there many days when the turn of conversation one evening led him to

show that he had heard of the intended call to Glasgow.

"Oh? that's leaked out, then," exclaimed Downes.

"I suppose," replied Forbes, "you scarcely expected that it could be kept a secret."

"Well, no. A secret, they say, is no longer a secret when it's known to more than one. I presume you heard of this in the West."

"Yes, we were talking about it at Fernie Brae, and I've been thinking a good deal about it since."

Downes remained silent, waiting perhaps to hear what his companion had been thinking, or his friends at Arderholm had been saying, on the subject. Forbes was, therefore, obliged to go on. "Of course," he said, "I knew you wouldn't stickle at such a sacrifice——."

"Come, come now, Willie," Downes interrupted, "don't tickle my vanity."

"Oh!" Forbes protested, "I didnt mean anything of that sort, though I believe we all thought that most men in your position would have accepted such a call at once. But that's not what I was thinking about. You have simply made me more deeply interested in your work by showing how true and

deep your own interest is. In fact, I am anxious to see a little more of it."

"I'll be very glad, Willie, if you will go with me in my rounds through my parish when you have time and feel inclined. It might be a relief from book work."

"I'd like immensely to go with you any time when I'll not be in your way. A little work of that sort might keep a fellow from growing a mere bookworm."

The result of this conversation was that Forbes occasionally joined Mr. Downes in his parochial visitations. At first he went merely to see more thoroughly the district in which the minister laboured; and he therefore simply strolled through the streets and lanes with his eyes open and his mind alert. For a long time he shrank from entering the houses, mainly from the feeling that he had no business there. But naturally his interest deepened as his observations extended, and he became eager to gain a more intimate acquaintance with the conditions of life to which the poor are doomed. By and by, therefore, he was induced at times to accompany the minister into the interior of their homes, when there was any case of peculiar pathos; and finally, after he had been introduced to such cases by the minister, he often returned to visit them by

himself. In that way he became a welcome visitor in many a home of poverty and distress, while the weary hours of many a bed-ridden sufferer were brightened by his cheerful manners and his interesting talk. The minister, in fact, came to find no little help in the volunteer services of his young companion, and took an opportunity of poking some good-natured fun at him in the shape of mock compliments for stealing the hearts of his people.

In after years, Forbes frequently described some of the sights he had seen during his missionary rambles in Mr. Downes' parish, and spoke of them as the main influences that had given a bent to the purposes of his life. Among these there was one scene to which he was particularly fond of referring, on account of the peculiarly powerful impression which it had left on his mind. One evening, not long after his first interest in the work had been excited, Mr. Downes had to visit a dying parishioner. "If you care for a mouthful of fresh air before going to bed, you might come with me," he said to Forbes. The young man assented at once, and in a few minutes the two were outside, walking towards the old town. On reaching Princes Street they turned up the mound, and passed into High Street.

"Now," said Downes, looking at his watch, "I'll meet you at this corner again in twenty minutes."

"All right," replied Forbes, and in the next instant he was left alone, at least in that loneliness which a man feels in the midst of a strange crowd. Of course he had seen the street repeatedly by daylight, but he had never seen it by night before. And this was Saturday night, when the working people of the neighbourhood were flushed with their weekly wages, and spending them often with a wasteful recklessness startling to many who enjoy a larger and more certain income. At first, Forbes was simply dumbfoundered by the bewildering variety of the motley crowds that jostled him at every step. Then the utter strangeness of the scene gave it a weird appearance that made him feel almost eerie at times. As he got over the bewilderment of the first general impression, he began to study the scene in detail. The life, which obtruded itself upon his view in manifold forms of repulsiveness, stood in such marked contrast with the comfort, the cleanliness, the moral propriety of the life he had known himself, that his feelings turned to mingled horror and pity for the unfortunate beings who are obliged to live in such a physical and moral environment.

Mr. Downes returned to the appointed rendezvous at the time agreed, and the two friends started on their way home. But Forbes was unusually reticent for a few minutes. At last he broke silence by saying, "You must excuse me for being somewhat less talkative than usual."

"Why, what's the matter?" his companion asked.

"The truth is, I've been terribly shocked by the sights I have been looking at while I walked up and down the street waiting for you."

"Oh! I forgot," said Mr. Downes, "that you had never seen the High Street on a Saturday night before. If I had thought of that, I might have left you at home."

"Don't speak of that, Mr. Downes. I'm really thankful to you for giving me a chance of seeing such a scene. It seems to have given me a far clearer insight into the life of the poor than all the observations I've made in the daytime. But I feel fairly stunned by it all, and I want a little time to recover my senses before I reflect on it coolly. I can't hold the scene at arm's length. It's too near yet. I feel as if I were mixed up in it."

Mr. Downes, with his well-trained tact in dealing with men, left his companion to cool his excitement by silent reflection. But when they reached home,

and were seated once more by their comfortable fireside, their talk soon veered round to the scene which they had left.

"Of course," said the minister, "you're to bear in mind that the glimpse you got of the misery and vice of our cities was very limited. Even in Edinburgh there's a great deal more of the wretched life you were looking at; and sometimes in far more horrible forms—for instance, in the form of crime and of indescribable vice. But in larger cities the misery is on a larger scale. Glasgow, for example, beats us completely. So does Liverpool. But in London the vastness of it all is simply appalling. You can't take it in. Then it appears that in the New World the big cities are fast sinking into the same condition. It's said that New York has already overtaken London in overcrowding, and in all the degradation that overcrowding entails."

"Well," said Forbes, "the whole thing is unspeakable enough in any form; and I begin to see as if I understood better what has fascinated you in your work."

"How's that?" asked the minister.

"Well," was the reply, "as I stood gloating at that scene to-night, I couldn't help saying to myself, 'There! that's a problem—rather it's *the* problem—

for the Church of Christ, for Christian philanthropy, for Christian statesmanship; in fact, it's the problem for all patriotic citizens, for all good men.' I don't know if your thoughts ever ran in that direction, but certainly that was the drift of mine."

"Man! Willie," exclaimed Mr. Downes with a good-humoured smile at the young fellow's enthusiasm, "you're a witch of a guesser, as we used to say when I was a boy. My thoughts were just exactly yours, only perhaps a little more pronounced. When I was in the Theological Hall, most of the students who showed any particular devoutness seemed at once to think of foreign missions as the only proper field for their enthusiasm. Well, I've known from childhood a good deal about paganism at home, about a physical and moral misery in our large towns, lying as completely outside of our Churches as any paganism in foreign countries. Such terribly realistic pictures as you saw to-night were burnt into my brain at a very early period, and they always came between me and any pictures the foreign missionaries sketched of African niggers or Australian savages or South Sea Islanders. I'm sorry to confess that, with the narrow views of a mere laddie, as I was at the time, I was unjust to the claims of foreign missions. I can now understand

their work better. You can't help admiring the noble lives that have been given to the work, and I feel sure their inspiration has come back to the Church at home in many a way. But though I'm glad to think of so many heroic souls being drawn in that direction, I never felt drawn in that way myself. I couldn't pass by this tremendous problem at our very doors. I sometimes feel as if the Church had no right to exist when she spends so large a part of her resources in providing comfortable, and even luxurious, places of worship for well-to-do people, while she leaves a vast mass of our population outside all the benefits of our Christian civilisation."

While the minister was talking, his companion sat evidently absorbed in what was being said. He still maintained, for a brief interval, the attitude of silent meditation. At last the minister, looking at his watch, remarked, "Why, it's getting late; and to-morrow's my day of hard work. I think I'll toddle off to bed."

"I hope," said Forbes, in an apologetic tone, "I've not been keeping you too long."

"Oh no!" replied the minister; "but if we go on with the discussion of these questions, there's no saying when we'll stop, and I don't want to run the risk of losing my night's rest."

"Good-night, then, I think I'll enjoy this comfortable fire for another hour yet."

"Good-night," replied the minister, as he went off to his bedroom.

This was the first of numerous talks, which the two friends enjoyed, on the social problems of large cities, and of industrial life in general. Indeed, from this time, those questions became the absorbing subjects of thought with young Forbes. They are studies, however, which do not tell in the triumphs of academic life, and consequently his career at the University was just a little puzzling, if not disappointing, to his friends. This came out at a later period in a conversation at Fernie Brae. It was near the close of the last session that William Forbes spent at the University. Mr. Downes had, by his doctor's advice, gone off to enjoy two or three days' respite from labour at Arderholm. Travelling by an early train, he was in time to enjoy an afternoon drive with Mrs. Nicoll down through Inverarder and along the seashore. The bracing salt air seemed to put a new life into him, and even brought some colour to his usually pale cheeks. Stimulated by the reinvigoration of his health, he was in a very happy mood when he sat down to tea with his old friend. In the course of conversation at the tea-

table, Nicoll had occasion to mention that Jamie Forbes had been causing a terrible amount of worry during the whole winter, but especially during the previous few days. This led Downes to remark that William Forbes was going to make up for the anxiety that his brother was causing.

"I'm glad to hear you say so," replied Nicoll. "My wife and I have been often curious to know what he's going to turn out. He has been taking no prizes or other honours——"

"Yes, yes," interrupted Downes, "I know all you're going to say; and he feels it as well as you. I feel, too, that he has to bear with a good deal of misconstruction from you all."

The minister paused a few moments, when his friend urged him, "Go on, Downes, we're really very much interested in what you were going to say."

"Well," continued Downes, "that young fellow has the force in him to take prizes and medals—in fact, to carry everything before him in his University course. But"—here came another pause—"well, I don't wish to indulge in too pompous talk, and I'll only say in plain Scotch, that 'he's got ither fish to fry.' He has, for the past couple of years especially, been following out a line of independent work that, I'm sure, you'll hear about by and by. You must

have got some hint of it now and then in his talk when he's here. But you can form no idea of it as I can from seeing him every day. I can tell you he's working out an intellectual and moral force that will change a good many of men's ideas, and probably their practice too. Not taking prizes! Why, it's just marvellous that he takes the creditable position he has kept all along with this other work of his."

"Well," said Nicoll, "we're immensely pleased to hear you speak so enthusiastically about the young fellow."

"Yes, indeed," his wife added, "you mustn't forget that he was a pupil of mine, and I'm going to claim a little credit for his education too."

"Oh! I forgot about that, Mrs. Nicoll," said her guest. "I'm pretty sure you'll be proud of your pupil before long."

"I think," said Mr. Nicoll, "I have some idea of the drift the young chap's thoughts are taking, and I hope he'll soon have a chance of letting the world know about them."

The world was to hear of them much sooner and in another way, than Mr. Nicoll imagined at the time.

CHAPTER XV.

Through Darkness to Light.

"His rash fierce blaze of riot could not last,
For violent fires soon burn out themselves."
—*Richard II.*, Act. II., Scene 1.

The Sunday after Mr. Downes returned to Edinburgh, was the beginning of a crisis in the history of Arderholm. The day of rest opened with an unwonted brightness and warmth for such an early period of the year. For Mrs. Forbes, the happy feeling of the clear spring weather was intensified by a happier feeling of security about her elder son. For he had pulled up in his wild career during the past few days, and he was now starting with his mother to church. But her happy security was not to last long. They had not gone more than half the way when the young man suddenly stopped, as he thrust his hand into his pocket, and exclaimed, "Excuse me, mother; I've forgotten my handkerchief. Just walk on, and I'll follow you in a minute."

For the moment the mother did not suspect the excuse to be an invention. Accordingly she walked on, turning an occasional expectant glance back upon the road, and at last went into the church. Scarcely was she seated, however, when the horrid suspicion flashed upon her: and it was confirmed in a very few minutes. Naturally, she did not care to excite unpleasant comment by leaving the church; and therefore she forced herself to an external calm in violent contrast with the storm of internal anxiety which almost drowned the minister's voice. On returning home, she went at once to the parlour, where her husband was seeking relief from the languor of enfeebled health which had been adding to her anxieties. She learnt of course at once that her son had never been in the house since he left it with her in the morning; and the two parents needed no explanations to realise what was before them—probably many a weary hour of fearful foreboding, in which utter uncertainty would leave the imagination free to conjure up any dreadful contingency.

Fortunately, there was one friend whose unwearied kindness had stood by Jamie Forbes in all his sin and shame, watching every chance of reaching a helpful hand for his rescue. This was Dugald

M'Killop. Of course, Dugald was in a position to make inquiries in quarters that could not easily be reached by Jamie's own father. Many a time he had sought him out in his favourite haunts, and, sometimes by a little kindly force, but oftener by the simple power of a strong will over a weak one, had brought him home. From his constant thoughtfulness, Dugald had learnt about Jamie's disappearance early in the afternoon. A few inquiries brought him the information that, shortly after the church bell stopped, Jamie had been seen hurrying on the way down to Inverarder. Dugald had gone down himself, and at the hotel had learnt that three young scapegraces had hired a dogcart there, and that Jamie had been seen joining them on the road just after they started. From this point, Dugald was unable to trace the movements of the party, and could only wait in readiness to render help if opportunity offered.

As often happens in the mutable climate of Scotland, the sky, which had been an almost cloudless blue in the morning, had become quite gray in the early afternoon, and before sundown the rain was pouring in torrents. Dugald, therefore, could only sit at his window, and, while reading his Bible, keep in view the road to Inverarder, in hope that he

might catch a glimpse of Jamie returning home. Nothing, however, but the lonely road splashed by the heavy raindrops met his sight. At last night came down upon his dreary watch; but he was still sustained by a powerful sympathetic realisation of the drearier anguish which was being borne by the father and mother as they waited for the return of their prodigal son. For often he still went to the window, and looked across the darkness towards Burnside in hope that, by seeing all the lights extinguished there, he might infer that the wanderer had returned, and that the whole family had gone to rest. But still the light from the parlour window, instead of sending a cheerful thrill through the gloom, only told to the kindly soul of the sadder gloom that lay upon the spirits of the other watchers.

The old-fashioned clock in Dugald's house had roused him once more by its harsh metallic gong, striking ten. He rose and went to the door to get, if possible, a clearer view than from the window. The stillness, deepened perhaps for feeling at least by the depth of the darkness, indicated that the rain was over; and to calm his growing restlessness, Dugald put on his cap and strolled along the road with a faint hope of possibly discovering something

which might put an end to the day's anxiety. There was a cinder path at the side of the road, which showed simply an invisible blackness to the sight; but about halfway between his cottage and Burnside, his eye was attracted by a dingy whiteness just before his feet. He stopped and endeavoured by eagerness of gaze to discover what it was, but the gloom refused to give up its mystery to sight. He therefore stooped to feel the object, and through his warm dry hands there rushed a chilling shiver as they came in contact with a human figure in clothing that seemed to have been completely soaked in the drenching rain. For a moment, he was overpowered by the horror of an intolerable dread; heart and nerve were paralysed. But a robust frame and the natural simplicity of a life that had never known disease soon restored self-possession, and gave play to the moral force of his will.

"Jamie, my puir laddie, can it be you?" he exclaimed with a pathetic tenderness of voice. But no sound or movement indicated that he was heard. He felt the hands, the face of the young man: they had the clammy coldness of a corpse. But a thrust of his hand beneath the vest satisfied him that the warmth of life had not gone, that the heart was beating still. With presence of mind he groped

about the head for the hat which had fallen off. Finding it after a search of two or three seconds, he stuffed it into his pocket in order to avoid needless gossip by its being found next day. He then slipped his powerful arms under the limp form, swung it over his right shoulder, and hurried on to Burnside. Though he made as little noise as poss'ble at the gate and on the gravel, he could not prevent the quick ear of the mother from hearing; and she was at the door before he reached it. She was followed by her husband, though he showed more overpowering agitation in his manner. Probably both wer too completely stunned by the sight of the apparently lifeless figure to speak or even to think distinctly on the situation. At all events, there was complete silence till Dugald came inside, when he suggested in kindly deferential tone, "Maybe, mem, the best plan would be for me to cairry 'im straicht to his room, if you would be sae kind as to show me the way."

Evidently, both father and mother felt that they had to lean on the strong muscle and nerve and kindly moral force of their faithful employee, and that it would be better to leave him to direct what was to be done. Accordingly, Mrs. Forbes only said, as she turned to lead the way upstairs, "I

might have known, Dugald, that it would be you that would come to our help again in this trouble."

On reaching the bed-room, Mrs. Forbes pointed to a large arm-chair, in which Dugald gently laid his burden down. "Noo," he said, "I'll tell ye some ither time a' that I ken aboot this mishap. But we maun hurry to dae the best we can for the puir laddie. For I fand him lying oot on the road, and guidness kens hoo lang he had been there. For he's sair drookit wi' the rain. But I think we'll sune bring 'im roon." All the time he was talking, Dugald was kneeling before the unconscious figure on the chair, pulling off the soaking boots and socks. Then, as he rose, he turned to Mrs. Forbes, while he began to unfasten necktie and collar, "Noo, mem, if ye'll alloo me to suggest, ye micht get the warmest flannels he wears, and toast them weel afore the fire doonstairs. The maister and me—we'll get aff his wat claes, and rub him dry, and I'll come doon for the het flannels as sune's we're ready."

All was done at once, as Dugald suggested; and before many minutes the cold form of the young man was laid in bed, wrapped in warm flannels and covered with warm blankets.

"Noo, mem," said Dugald again, "I'm thinkin'

I've dune a' that I can tae help you here. Sae I'll just step down to the doctor's and bring him up."

"I was just going for him myself when you spoke," said Mr. Forbes.

"'Deed, sir, if ye'll excuse me for saying 't, I've noticed for some time back ye have na been just bye-ordinar' weel, and ye're lookin' geyan sair forfochten wi' a' this trouble comin' on ye the nicht. I dinna think ye should venture oot into the cauld nicht air, mair spaicially as it's geyan damp efter the rain. We canna afford tae hae you laid up, sir."

"It's very kind of you, Dugald, to be so thoughtful," said Mrs. Forbes. "You're right, I think, about Mr. Forbes: and we'll be under another obligation to you if you save him from going out to-night."

"There's nae obligation worth speaking aboot, mem, ava. I buit tae gang oot at ony rate, and it's just a wee bit roon tae gang for the doctor on my way hame."

With these words Dugald hurried off, and a few minutes brought him to the doctor's residence. Dr. MacBean was still a bachelor. He occupied part of a cottage belonging to an old couple, who cooked his meals and attended to his material wants in general. He had made a separate door into his sur-

gery at one end of the house, so that he could receiv patients, ıd go out or in, without disturbing tl other inmates. There was still a light burning the surgery when Dugald came in sight of Accordingly, he made for the surgery door, gave it a gentle rap. "Come in," was the re[illegible] from the cheery voice inside. Dugald the ore opened the door and entered. Immediately on being recognised, he was received by the doctor with a hearty welcome in Gaelic. The old mother-tongue acted like a charm on both, and for a few moments Dugald forgot the urgency of his errand. But whenever he mentioned it, the professional and moral enthusiasm of the doctor was aroused. "Well, Dugald," he said, still keeping to the Gaelic, "you see I'm half undressed; I was getting ready for bed. Just you go on, and tell me all about it, while I'm getting ready to go out. That 'll save time."

So, by the time Dugald had told his story, the doctor was ready. The two started, the doctor putting out his light and locking his surgery door. A few minutes brought them to Burnside, and the door was again opened by Mrs. Forbes before they had crossed the gravel-path from the gate. Dugald remained in the parlour, saying to the doctor, "I'll

just wait for a minute to see if I can dae onything to. you afore I gang hame."

The doctor simply shook hands with Mrs. Forbes, and let her lead the way upstairs, where Mr. Forbes was sitting by the bedside. After a few words of greeting, during which the doctor looked somewhat thoughtfully at Mr. Forbes himself, he turned to the patient, who opened his eyes as he had done several times since he was laid in bed, stared for a few seconds without any distinct indication of intelligence, and then closed them again. Two or three minutes were spent in careful examination and reflection before the doctor could rest satisfied; and even then he turned from the patient with a very dubious look. "Now," he observed in cautious but frank tone, "it's impossible to say what may be the upshot o' this. It may turn out to be nothing very serious, but we can't tell at present." Then turning to Mrs. Forbes, he added: "The best plan will be for you to try and get a good sleep. You'll be wanted in the morning, and maybe the whole day. I must stay here, for the present at anyrate, to watch the turn that things may take. I see you have a grand easy chair here. I'll get a good rest in it, and maybe a nap part of the time."

All arrangements were made for the doctor's

comfort during the night, and the house was soon perfectly still.

For some days the patient continued in the same precarious state, watched with alternating hopes and fears by his friends. For, beyond the general exhaust'on resulting from prolonged dissipation, there was no symptom of disease that would inevitably prove fatal. The exhaustion of the patient had been intensified by the events of the Sunday on which he had gone off for the unfortunate drive with his three cronies. It appeared that the whole party, while still some miles from Inverarder, had come off the dogcart to stroll for a few minutes along the seashore. The horse, left at freedom with his head turned homewards, naturally did not remain standing long, but started off at a pace which was soon quickened into a rapid trot, and turned up all right without a driver, at his stable. The four youths, by this time all half-tipsy, were thus forced to find their way home afoot amid torrents of rain. They had all reached Inverarder somewhat sobered by their drenching. But poor Jamie Forbes was left to grope his weary way alone in the dark up to Arderholm; and, enfeebled as he was by the drain of alcoholic excesses, aggravated by the inability to digest food for a long time, it is hardly intelligible how he

should have struggled so far on his way. The struggle, however, had completely exhausted the feeble relics of his physical energy, and thus seemed to have annihilated the recuperative force of nature.

As the days went by without the patient showing any tendency to rally, Dr. MacBean felt his personal responsibility becoming so serious, that he suggested the consultation of an eminent physician in Glasgow. Mr. Forbes at once agreed to the suggestion. The physician came. After a long examination, however, he was able only to repeat what Dr. MacBean had said again and again, "The poor fellow, I needn't say, is very low. We must just be patient till he gets an appetite, and begins to take plenty of nourishment. Of course, he has his youth on his side, but he'll need careful nursing for a while."

But while Mrs. Forbes was out of the room, her husband took the opportunity of asking some advice about himself. The question was, of course, addressed mainly to the elder physician; and he proceeded to make a careful examination, using his stethoscope in consequence of a hint given by Dr. MacBean before they arrived at Burnside. The examination was just over when Mrs. Forbes returned to say that dinner was on the table, so that nothing definite could be said at the time about Mr.

Forbes's case. After dinner, the two doctors left and drove to the quay at Inverarder. As soon as they were fairly on their way, the elder remarked to his companion, "You were unfortunately right. The chief danger for the young fellow will be heart-failure. The action at present is alarmingly feeble. Then you were right, too, in your conjecture about his father."

"It's a great satisfaction," said Dr. MacBean, "that you had a chance of using the stethoscope. You see he never asked my advice about himself, and I've had no chance of making an examination."

"Well, I'm afraid things are worse than you could have fancied without an examination. The heart's in an advanced stage of degeneration. He may go off like a shot any day."

"I was confirmed in my conjecture," said Dr. MacBean again, "by what I was told about Mr. Forbes's father, who was, it seems, a smith in the parish long ago. The old man, I've heard, died very suddenly. That's all I was able to learn, but it makes one suspect the trouble with him too may have been in the heart."

"Ah! that makes matters worse. I'm afraid we'll have to acknowledge that our science is helpless for either of the patients. We'll just have to wait, and

hope that things may turn out for both better than we can anticipate."

"I suppose I ought to let Mr. Forbes know."

"Certainly. But you'll not need to seek an opportunity. He'll ask for himself."

The doctors reached Inverarder as the steamer was approaching the pier. When it had been moored alongside, the elder shook hands with the younger, while he said, "Good-bye, Dr. MacBean. I'm really glad to have made your acquaintance: and I hope, whenever you're in Glasgow, and have half an hour to spare, you will come and see us. We have lunch every day at one. We're plain folks; but if you'll take pot-luck wi' us, there 'll always be a plate for you."

Dr. MacBean went to call on two or three patients in Inverarder, and then returned to Arderholm in the late afternoon. On entering his surgery, he found a note from Mr. Forbes, requesting him to call at his office about six o'clock. The request did not take the doctor by surprise, and was far from being unwelcome, as it relieved him from the task of finding a convenient opportunity for making the necessary explanation, while it seemed to indicate that his patient's mind might be in some measure prepared for what he had to say. Accordingly, he

made his way to the office in the mill just as preparations were being made for closing the day's work. A few minutes after he arrived, he was left alone with Mr. Forbes. It was a trying moment for both—for the one to speak, for the other to hear, a sentence pronounced by the inexorable laws of Nature. But the trying character of the ordeal was greatly diminished by the character of the two men, and the interview resulted in drawing closer the bond of friendship by which they had already been attracted to one another.

Mr. Forbes began by explaining why he had sought the interview. He wanted, of course, to get a frank explanation of the conclusion to which the two doctors had come after their examination of himself as well as of his son. Dr. MacBean began by referring to the son, and, of course, about him he had nothing to say, but to repeat with confirmation the opinion he had already expressed almost every day since the accident. He then referred to Mr. Forbes himself. Whenever the drift of his explanation became evident, he was naturally allowed to go on without interruption; and as he paused after having made the state of the case sufficiently clear, both men were for the moment subdued to that profound hush which is apt to betoken a solemn crisis

in life. The silence was broken at last by Mr. Forbes holding out his hand to his adviser, while he said, "Well, doctor, I'm very thankful to you for being so frank. I know that for a man with your heart this maun hae been a painful duty; and I'm not sure that many, even in your profession, would hae done it so conscientiously."

"I don't know about that," was the doctor's reply. "But," he went on, "you will understand now how we said so little about you this afternoon while Mrs. Forbes was there. Of course, it's for you to decide whether she should be told or not; but my feeling is, that, if possible, she should be spared."

"O yes, yes, yes," Mr. Forbes broke in with eager emphasis; "spare her by all means. She has enough to bear already." And then, as he turned away to hide his emotion, he was heard exclaiming, "Puir Mary

After a few moments, the doctor added, "I was going to say that with some women it might have been necessary to stir up their affectionate care a bit by giving them a hint of what they had to fear. But you'll lose nothing by Mrs. Forbes not knowing the nature of the danger. She's anxious enough about you already. Then," he added after a pause, "there's no use of making things out to be worse

than they really are. Perhaps Mrs. Forbes may never need to know about this at all. Jamie may soon come round, and then we'll send you both off for a long voyage and a complete rest. At any rate, now that you know you have to take care of yourself, there's no saying how long you may live."

"Aye, aye," replied Mr. Forbes, with a good-humoured, but rather sad smile; "as my mother used to say, 'It's the crackit jug that gangs langest tae the waal.'"

The two men then parted for the night. For some days after, no change of any importance took place, except what seemed on the whole favourable to both patients. On the one hand, the son gave some comfort and hope to his friends by a few words faintly uttered from time to time, indicating at least the recovery of conscious intelligence. On the other hand, the father began seriously to follow the hint given by his medical advisers. On the day after his interview with them, he took a chance of saying to Mr. Nicoll, that "the doctors had told him he must take things a little easier, and he supposed he would have to obey their commands."

"It's the advice I would have given myself," was the manager's reply, "if it could have come with a good grace from me. But now, when the doctors

have struck that note, I'm at liberty to chime in. The fact is, things are going very smoothly in the business world just now, and you may let them jog along without bothering yourself about them. Of course you'll be at hand if any difficulty turns up; but if you don't hear from us, you may take for granted that all's well."

This conversation took place in the office at the mill; and by good luck it happened that William Forbes, who had just returned from Edinburgh for the summer vacation, was at the time seated beside his father, reading the morning newspapers. Attracted by the conversation, he laid down his newspaper and said, "Do you know, father, what I've been thinking since I came home? It seems to me I might give a little help here in the office till you and Jamie are all right again." And then after a pause, as nothing was said in answer to his proposal, he added, "I've often heard it made a complaint about ministers, that they know nothing about business life, that they are sometimes sad bunglers in the business affairs of the church, and even in the finances of their own homes. I don't see that I could employ my time better for a little while than by giving a few hours a day to the work of the office here."

"What do you think of this proposal, Mr. Nicoll?" asked Mr. Forbes.

"Well, I never thought of it before; but I confess it seems to me not a bad idea. Whether William could do better or not, he certainly might do worse than employ his time in the way he suggests."

"Well, Willie," said the father, "since Mr. Nicoll's pleased, and you want it yourself, you'd better just take Jamie's desk for a little."

And so it came about that William Forbes took for the time his brother's place in the Arderholm mill. All the issues of this no one could foresee. One immediate result, however, was that he was evidently able, almost from the first, to render valuable assistance to the manager; and, consequently, his father became more easily reconciled to the temporary renunciation of work. Two or three weeks passed, during which Mr. Forbes took no active part in the management of his business. He sauntered into his office at a late hour in the forenoon, read the morning papers in a very leisurely way, took a drive occasionally along the seashore in the afternoon, and in general managed to carry out the prescription of his medical advisers with a great deal of loyalty. The effect of all this was a decided improvement in the appearance of his health, and

even Dr. MacBean began to hope that, by a life of the same easy even tenor, his patient might ward off for some years the issue of his disease.

But the whole outlook was kept still very doubtful by the very doubtful state of Jamie's health. Weeks had now gone by, during which he was barely holding on to life. As yet he had shown no decided sign of any progress towards recovery. Even his recovery of consciousness served, by his look and by occasional utterances, to show that he was not sensible of any growth in vigour such as could encourage him to cherish hope of restoration. Meanwhile the father seemed to be growing more attached to him every day. Often he would spend hours at a time resting in a luxurious arm-chair in Jamie's room, ostensibly reading, but often dozing or gazing wistfully at the motionless features of the pale young face on the pillow.

One day while Mr. Forbes was thus occupied, his wife came into the room, sat down by the bedside, and took the patient's hand tenderly in hers, as she had often done of late. Her son opened his eyes and looked at her, as if he wished to speak. She bent her head so as to bring her ear nearer to his lips, for his utterance had become painfully feeble. "Mother," he said, "I wish I could speak; I have

that much I would like to say." He seemed to be making an effort to go on, but his mother checked him with, "Never mind to exert yourself just now, Jamie. It'll only do you harm. By and by, when you get stronger, you can tell us all you want to say."

"But I'm feared I'll never get a chance, mother," he said, with an effort of despair, and then relapsed into silence, as if from exhaustion. He lay for some hours in his usual motionless calm. Nothing but the slight movement of breathing indicated that there was life in him still. Late in the day, however, his mother was at his bedside again with his hand in hers as before, while her husband occupied his customary seat. She lowered her ear once more to catch some words he was whispering. "Mother," she heard him say, "I wish you could see the wonnerfu' change that's come ower me."

"I've seen't in your face, Jamie, for some time back."

After a pause of a few moments, he whispered again, "There's something in the Bible—I don't know where—about the devil going out o' a man an' leaving him like a house that's swept and garnished. That micht fit me, mother."

The allusion was happy enough so far as it went

in his thought, and he evidently had no recollection of its tragic association. His mother of course did not follow it any further, and he seemed unable to continue the conversation, so that the sick-room resumed its wonted stillness. But in the evening, when the father and mother were alone in the parlour, they began to talk of the change to which Jamie had referred. The change, in fact, had struck Mrs. Forbes for some time with astonishment. Not only had the bloated effect of her son's dissipation entirely vanished from his features; not only had they become refined into something of that spirituality which often comes upon a face when physical life, with all its interests, is ebbing away; but what affected her most deeply was the fact that her son's likeness to her ill-fated brother had been completely obliterated. In place of this she now saw a likeness to his own father. But, on mentioning this to Mr. Forbes, he said, "Why, Mary, I've been thinking for the last few days that he's grown very like you, and I've been wondering that I never noticed the likeness before." Probably both were right, and the discovery by both pointed to a modification of those numerous subtle influences upon which the distinctive features of physical life, perhaps also of moral character, depend.

Next day, Mr. and Mrs. Forbes were in the sick-room again, when their son made a sign as if he wished to speak to his father. Accordingly, the father came over to a chair by the bedside, and bent down to catch the feeble voice of his son. The mother sat on the edge of the bed, and both parents listened in breathless silence while their son spoke slowly and with long pauses, "I wish God would spare me to make up for a' the sorrow I've gien you. ——You might get some pleasure in me yet. ———But oh! I'm that weary—weary a' the day, and sometimes a' the nicht; I ken there's just one place for me noo—where the weary are at rest." Then, after a longer pause, he added, "I've been a bad son to you both. I would like to feel that you forgi'e me for a' the ill I've done."

The father had been exerting strong restraint over his natural feelings during the whole of the broken utterances; but the pathos of the last words completely carried him away. Falling on his knees by the bedside, and clasping the son's hand in both of his own, he sobbed out in helpless anguish, "O Jamie, don't speak o' me forgiving you. It's *me* that needs to be forgiven for no looking better after my puir laddie!"

There was a solemn hush for a minute or two,

when Mrs. Forbes whispered to her husband, "George, dear, you had better not allow yourself to be agitated so much: it may do Jamie harm, and yourself as well." The strong man allowed himself to be gently raised by his wife; and as he took his seat again, he felt a sensation of pain at his heart, which re-awakened alarming thoughts that had begun to slumber. Mrs. Forbes also resumed her seat on the edge of the bed, while she took a handkerchief that lay by her son's pillow, and gently wiped away a few tears that were trickling from under his closed eyelids. A perfect quiet, continued for a few minutes, enabled all three to regain their former composure; and then Mrs. Forbes suggested, "Now, I think father had better go back to his easy chair, and rest for a little till I go down and look after the tea."

The same evening, before leaving her son in charge of his nurse for the night, Mrs. Forbes brought her Bible, as she had been accustomed to read a few verses to him now and then, mostly at his own request. "Is there anything particular you would like me to read to-night, Jamie?"

"'The Pharisee and the Publican,'" he replied at once, as if he had been thinking of the parable.

She read it to him accordingly; and as she

finished, he said with an unspeakable pathos in his tone, "That's what I'll hae to do, mother. I daurna look you and father in the face; and when I come before God, I'll just hae to hing doon my heid in shame, and beg Him to be merciful to me a sinner."

His mother, with wise kindliness, replied merely in the words, "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other."

The son opened his eyes for a moment and said, "Thank you, mother. Good-night."

For two or three days after this it seemed as if Jamie Forbes had exhausted himself; he lay in such unbroken silence. Then he gave his mother to understand that he would like very much to see Dugald M'Killop. Dugald was sent for accordingly, and came over to Burnside in the evening after he had washed up a bit and made himself, as he expressed it, "fit to appear in the maister's hoose." He walked on tiptoe into the sick-room, and took a seat by the bedside. He moved, however, so quietly, that the mother had to tell her son that Dugald was there. It seemed at times in those days as if the young fellow, feeling his inability to speak much, tried, as we often do in making up a telegram, to put what he had to say into as few words as possible. On this occasion, as he opened his eyes and fixed

them on the old man's face, he said simply, "Dugald, ye've been anither faither to me."

"Hoot, toot," was the kindly reply, "it's no worth speaking about, onything I ever did for you, Mr. James. Fine I ken ye wad hae dune as muckle for me, and a hantle mair. There's no a better heart in braid Scotland."

A dubious smile passed over the young man's face, while he said, "Ye're ower kind, Dugald; I've been a bad boy all my life."

"Hoot, toot," was Dugald's kindly exclamation again, "ye maun na be ower hard on yoursel' that way. Nae doubt ye had tae fecht wi' sair temptations that the lave o' us ken naething aboot."

The feeble features of the patient were invigorated for a moment with an unusual animation, as he replied, "Aye, Dugald, it was an awfu' battle I've had tae fecht." Then, after a pause, he added, "Nane o' ye kens hoo often I had the best o't. Ye saw only whan I was beat."

"Aye, aye," said the good old man, replying mainly to the first part of the remark, "but the Lord kens, Jamie; and ye may be sure He's gien ye credit for't a' in His book."

After this there was a long silence, unbroken save for a few words of conversation on indifferent matters

between Dugald and Mrs. Forbes. But Jamie intimated that he wanted to say something further; and, as Dugald stooped to hear the feeble voice more distinctly, he caught the words, "I canna help thinking sometimes, Dugald, that the Lord's gey hard on me, no letting me live a wee while longer, just to gie me a chance o' doing better."

"I dinna wonner, puir fellow, that sic thochts should come ower ye noo and than. But the Lord Himsel' tells us, 'In My Faither's hoose are mony mansions.' Noo, I'm thinkin' this worl' that we're leevin in here's just ane o' thae mansions, and whiles I jaloose it's maybe the puirest o' the haill lot. Weel, gin the Lord taks ye awa' frae here, it maun just be because He has far granner wark for ye tae dae in ane o' His ither mansions than ony He could fin' for ye in this puir bit worl' o' oors. And that hard battle ye had to fecht—maybe it was tae drill ye for the gran' wark ye're gaun tae dae yonder."

The mother, as well as the son, was deeply interested in what the good old carpenter was saying; and it was only after he had finished that she turned to her son, and saw again a few tears oozing from under his closed eyelids. As she wiped them

away, Dugald rose and said he thought it was time for him to say good-night.

"Good-bye," replied Jamie, "and thank you for coming."

"Na, Mr. Jeames, it's me that has tae thank ye for inviting an auld body like me. Guid-nicht, and I hope we'll see your kind face coming roon tae the shop again or lang."

The same evening Jamie said to his mother, "Be sure to tell Dugald what a great comfort his visit has been. Now, mother, you might read that passage about many mansions. I canna get them out o' my thoughts."

So the mother read a few verses from the fourteenth chapter of the Fourth Gospel, and the mystical quietism of their thought and language seemed to soothe the tired spirit into a peaceful slumber; so that, when she laid her book down, she slipped noiselessly out of the room, leaving her son, asleep, or apparently asleep, in charge of his nurse for the night.

Next morning early she was roused by the nurse tapping on her bedroom door. She got up quietly, slipped on a warm robe, and went into the sick-room. There she found the nurse in a state of great excitement, announcing, amid spasmodic sobs, "Oh! Mrs.

Forbes, it's a' bye at last. Ye see, Janet tell't me tae wauken her at five o'clock, for she has a washin' on haun the day. And it's just a wee while since I gaed and lookit at the clock but it was just half-past four. Sae I gaed back tae my chair to wait half an hoor. And I lookit at Mr. Jeames afore I sat doon, and he was sleeping real quate, just as usual. I could see the blankets rising up and doon on his breist wi' his breath. I was just gaun to see the clock again the noo, and I lookit at him as I was passin'; and oh! I saw the change in his face, and than I kent it was a' ower. Sae I gaed oot tae look at the clock, for I thocht ye wad like tae ken the exack minnit he slippit awa', and it was ten meenits tae five exackly. I've been listenin since the half-hoor tae hear the clock chappin five, and I havena heard a wheesht in the hoose a' the time. Sae the puir lad maun hae dwined awa just like a bairn fa'in asleep."

Mrs. Forbes was so stunned by the first announcement that she scarcely heard the rest of the nurse's chatter. She only said to her, "Well, you'd better go down and waken Janet." Then she went for her husband; but she met him coming to her in a dressing gown. "Dear me!" he exclaimed, "that auld body may be a good nurse, but she's a terrible

chatterbox. She's fairly roused me wi' her clatter. I hope she hasna startled Jamie."

"Come in and see him," was the wife's reply. And the two went in and stood together in presence of the sorrow which has been, and will continue to be, through all ages -a type of inconsolable human suffering—the yearning over the loss of a first-born.

After the funeral of James Forbes, the state of his father's health began to absorb the mother's anxiety. It did not astonish any one that, during the interval between the death and the funeral, Mr. Forbes should seem completely crushed by the blow which had fallen upon him. But when the funeral was over, day after day still went by, and he continued in the same state of unrelieved depression, as if all the elasticity had gone out of his nature, and he could never recover the energy which had made his life so fruitful. Dr. MacBean spoke to him one day about trying a change of scene, in hope that the idea might rally him a little. "It's too late, doctor. I'm no equal to that exertion just now;" and then, after a brief hesitation, he added, "if I'll ever be."

So he continued to while away the days in a weary, listless mood, rarely speaking except when spoken to, and then only in the briefest manner. This went on for nearly a month. Dr. MacBean

was at his wit's end what to do. He saw that, unless some change set in soon, the dreaded issue could not be far off; and yet he could not suggest any measure which might not involve an excitement that could only aggravate the disease.

But the end was even nearer than he anticipated. One afternoon, within a month from his son's death, Mr. Forbes was sitting in his office glancing over the day's newspapers. He had taken a seat at a desk with a paper spread before him. Preparations were being made for closing the work of the day. His son had gone out with Mr. Nicoll for a few minutes to look after some matters which required attention before closing. They returned to the office as the workers were beginning to troop out of the mill. Mr. Forbes was still seated where they had left him; but his arms were crossed on the desk, and his head was bent forward to rest on the arms. He seemed to have fallen asleep over his paper. Under this impression, William Forbes said cheerily, "Father, it's time we were moving. Mr. Nicoll's going to lock up."

No answer, not a movement followed. Mr. Nicoll and William, as if moved by a common dread, hurried over to Mr. Forbes. They found him dead.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Beginning of the Revolution.

"The old order changeth, yielding place to the new,
And God fulfils Himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world."

—*Tennyson.*

The morning after his father's death, William Forbes appeared in the office of the mill at the usual hour. The manager had just arrived. On seeing William enter he came forward with more than usual sympathetic kindliness of manner to greet him and to make inquiries about his mother. After answering these, William went on to say, "You will understand, Mr. Nicoll, how completely this has upset all calculations about my own future, as well as about mother, and about this immense business that's thrown on our hands. I've been thinking over it last night and this morning, and often through the night as well; but I'm fairly at sea still."

"No to interrupt you, Willie," said Mr. Nicoll, "it 'ill maybe bring matters to a point at once, if I

take on myself to say that the best thing you and I can do this morning, and for a good many mornings to come, is just to sit down to our desks and go on with our work as if nothing unusual had happened. It's not only important, but, if we would avoid serious danger, it's absolutely necessary, to show that the business of the mill is to be carried on just as before without any interruption."

"I'm very much obliged to you, Mr. Nicoll. That's substantially what I had to say, though I would have beat about the bush a little before getting to the point. The fact is, I felt a good deal of delicacy about the subject, for it's plain that the continuance of the business depends almost entirely on you."

"I don't see that at all," replied Mr. Nicoll. "You and your mother could make a very good bargain, even if I were left out c ucount altogether."

"That's very improbable, I think. However, if it were necessary to hold out inducements, I needn't say that mother and I are very willing to make it worth your while to identify yourself with the mill as long as you live."

"Well, fortunately, it *isn't* necessary to talk about inducements at all, Willie. My wife and I are both

so much indebted to your father and mother, that we can never repay their goodness."

"Well," William went on, "I can honestly say that my perplexity is about others as well as myself, or about mother either. I daresay we'd be tolerably provided for in any case."

"Much better provided for than I suspect you imagine," said Mr. Nicoll with a smile.

"But," William went on again without noticing the interruption, "I can't help seeing that I have to think of the hundreds that depend for their living——"

"Say thousands rather."

"I suppose there may be more than a thousand who get their living directly or indirectly from the mill."

"Yes, Willie. You've just got an inkling of the size of the business. It's a much bigger affair than you imagine."

"Well, I hope to find out exactly how things stand by and by. Meanwhile, I spoke of inducements merely to let you know that we're not selfishly assuming that you're to give your services to save the business without getting a fair return."

"Oh! that is all right; and now I think we'd better act on our understanding, and get to work."

"Very good," was the reply; and the two men parted to their several duties for the day. In the evening, they agreed upon a circular, which was printed next day, and sent to all the old customers and others interested in the trade of the mill. It simply stated that the business of Forbes & Company would be carried on under the old name of the firm, and solicited a continuance of favours. It was signed by William George Forbes and James Nicoll.

The work of the mill thus went on as before. The old customers continued to send in their orders, occasionally for a few days varying the colourless language of business correspondence with kindly expressions of regret and sympathy for the loss which the firm had sustained.

During the next few days the great change in the home at Burnside occupied the thoughts of all its inmates. But after the funeral of Mr. Forbes was over, his widow found many opportunities for calmer reflection on the issues of the change; and she began to indicate her perplexity to her son. "I'm sorry," she would say, "that this change is interrupting your studies, Willie." But it was never difficult to reconcile her to the interruption. Her son was always ready with explanations which showed at once the necessity of the course he was pursuing, and

the direction his thoughts were taking towards the solution of the problem he had taken in hand. One evening, about a week after the funeral, he said, as they were talking together, "Mother, I had no idea of the extent of the business that father has built up here."

"But," she replied, "that's just what's vexing me—to think that you're worrying yourself about a business you were na brought up to, when you and I might live quietly and economically, and you could follow your own wishes about the work you're to do in life."

"Aye, mother; but it's no ourselves only we've to think about, and that's what I meant by the extent of our business. I don't mean that you and I would be reduced to poverty if I didn't do my best to 'keep the mill gaun'; but it's simply awful to think what others would have to suffer if it were stopped. Mr. Nicoll tells me that we employ about a thousand workers regularly. Now, wi' wives and children that means two or three thousand more, that depend for their living on the wages of the workers. Then there are all the shopkeepers and others, whose trade would disappear if the mill were gone. All these people, mother, have surely a claim on us. Clearly, my duty is to see that they don't suffer any harm

from my looking after my own little plans without thinking what's to become o' them."

"You were aye a good boy," replied the mother, with legitimate pride in her son; "and I'll no say but you're right. But, I was thinking that, since there's nobody to provide for but you and me, we need na be at so much expense in the house."

"Toots, mother," he said with a smile; "that's a very small trifle, no worth worrying yourself about. I can't see that it can make a great difference, for all the general expenses of keeping the house must be just the same. "But," he added with a broader smile, "if you're flush wi' cash, you might gie me half a sovereign now and then for pocket-money, as you used to do. I don't believe I've had a penny to buy sweeties wi' since I came home. However," he went on in a more serious tone, "you may find enough to do wi' your spare cash; for there 'll be a good many calls on your charity before long, if all's true that I hear about this bank. It's going to be a bad business, they say."

The bad business, to which William Forbes referred, was a bank failure which caused wide disaster throughout the West of Scotland. On the morning on which the news came to Arderholm, Mr. Nicoll observed to William Forbes, "Your father was a

man of extraordinary business intelligence. Do you know he told me confidentially a long while ago, that he knew something of the business that bank was doing, and he didn't believe that it would ever come out all right? For a good while we haven't kept a bit of its paper in our hands an hour longer than necessary. There may be a few pound notes of the bank among the cash in the safe; but beyond that the failure 'ill no affect us directly, and I suppose there 'ill be enough left out o' the wreck to pay the notes."

"I wonder," said Forbes, after a moment's reflection, "why they never opened a branch here."

"Thereby hangs a tale," answered Mr. Nicoll with a smile. "Some years ago they offered your father very favourable terms, but the bait didn't take; and as there would have been no business to speak of without his account, the project went no farther. They did open, as you know, a branch at Inverarder, where they had some business with the summer visitors."

"Well," said Forbes, "I'm glad the people here are not going to suffer much from the failure."

"Yes," Mr. Nicoll replied; "I don't hear of anybody in this neighbourhood that's involved, except Mr. Boyd. You'll remember him. It was his

handsome daughter by the bye, that you played the part of knightly champion to long ago," added Mr. Nicoll laughing.

Forbes joined in the laugh. "I remember something of that boyish escapade," he said.

"Come, come now," Mr. Nicoll continued in merry tone. "Don't pretend that you've never been admiring the young lady since"

The manager, however, was taken aback to find that his companion did not enter into the fun, but replied in a tone of evident sincerity. "To tell the truth, I haven't seen her since, so far as I can remember. I understand she has been away from home for some years at boarding schools and on the Continent."

"Yes; I forgot. But she's been back for some time."

"Well, it's just possible I may have seen her without recognising her; and if that's the case, I'm afraid I must confess that I've been dreadfully insensible to her charms."

"Why," said Mr. Nicoll, "I'm astonished at that. My wife just raves about her beauty, and I confess I think her myself as bonny a girl as I've ever seen. She's very often at our house. She's in fact my wife's most intimate companion, and we both have a

very high opinion of her intelligence and character as well as her beauty."

"That makes her father's loss all the sadder," said Forbes. "But how did he come to be involved? I understood he was out o' business altogether."

"That's, unfortunately, how it has come about," Mr. Nicoll explained. "He retired from business some time ago, and it's said he realised enough to make him very comfortable. But, unfortunately, he had invested in this bank. I don't know the amount of his stock, but, of course, he'll be ruined before he meets all his liability."

"I'm very sorry to hear that."

"Aye, it's a sad affair both for the old man and the daughter. Poor girl! I don't suppose, wi' all her accomplishments she's learnt any occupation for a living."

Nothing further was to be said on the subject, and the two men were moving off to their several duties, when the manager turned to his companion, and said, "By the bye, you remember Mike Sullivan's connection wi' that escapade o' yours? Did anything ever surprise you more than to see the man Dugald M'Killop has made out o' that lump o' a laddie?"

"I'm sorry I haven't had a chance of seeing him.

I don't think I've been round at the carpenter's shop since I began work here. The truth is, I've a great deal to learn about the business; I've scarcely been out o' the office all the time."

"Well," said Mr. Nicoll, "the office is the best place to learn about the *whole* work o' the mill. But now," he added, pointing to the letters on the office desk, "there's a large number of orders to be filled to-day. If you care to look into the carpenter's shop this morning, you might find out what packing-cases they've got ready."

"I really would like to go round and see what's going on there," replied Forbes, and off he went.

As he entered he was met by Dugald M'Killop, to whom he explained his message. Dugald turned towards a workman at some distance, and called "Mike!" The call was answered by a tall well-built young man, who took off his paper cap as he approached, displaying a head of well-brushed hair which had been kept free by the cap from the sawdust and shavings flying about the workshop. "Mike," Dugald explained, "keeps the shop-book, Mr. William. He can gie you a' the information you want; and maybe you'll excuse me for leaving you in his hauns. We're by ordinar thrang this morning."

"All right, Dugald," replied his young employer. "Don't let me interfere wi' your work."

As Dugald moved away, Forbes turned to Mike and said, "Why, I'd scarcely have recognised you. I'm sorry I've never got round to the shop here; but, of course, you know I've been kept pretty busy for the last few weeks."

"Aye, sir," Mike replied; "the business has been gaun on fine since you took it in haun."

"Yes," said Forbes, ignoring Mike's compliment; "business has been very good for some time. That's what has put me so close to my desk."

"There's mony o' us, sir," Mike went on with his flattering, though sincere, language—"there's mony o' us has been saying, we'd be awfu' weel pleased, if ye were tae gie up the ministership a'thegither, and bide wi' us in the mill."

"I might do worse," said Forbes, a little perplexed by the turn the conversation was taking.

"Deed, sir," urged Mike "if ye'll excuse me for being sae free, I dinna weel ken hoo ye could dae better. There's no a worker in the mill that widna gang through fire and water for you and Mr. Nicoll. They're a' that weel pleased wi' the way ye manage things."

"I'm afraid they give me credit for what belongs

to Mr. Nicoll. But that reminds me that I'm keeping him waiting. We've got some big orders this morning, and he wants to know if you've got enough packing-cases on hand. I'm glad to find that you keep the shop-book."

"Aye, Mr. William. Maybe you mind I was at the scule about the same time as yoursel', and Mr. MacVicar learnt me writing and coonting forbye reading. So, when Mr. M'Killop fand oot that I could write and coont, he pot me tae keep this book."

While he was speaking, Mike took down the shop-book from a shelf, and turned over the leaves till he came to the page he was searching for. "There, Mr. William," he said; "there's the exack figures Mr. Nicoll's wanting."

Forbes made a memorandum and went off.

The orders, for which the packing-cases were wanted, kept Forbes and his partner busy all day. In the evening, as the workers were trooping out of the mill, and the office was being arranged for closing, the two sat down for a few minutes' chat. The work of the day had forced on Forbes very vividly the extent of the business in which he had been suddenly called to take part. During the first few weeks of his work he was too much occupied in

mastering details to have any leisure for grasping the situation as a whole. Now, however, the vastness of his father's enterprise was beginning to dawn upon his mind. Several times of late, as the splendour of its profits flashed on him while he handled a cheque for some peculiarly large order, he had turned to his partner with a comical look of bewilderment, exclaiming, "I say, Mr. Nicoll, what are we to do with all this money?" Again, this evening, while he glanced over the deposits for the day in the bank-book, the same perplexing problem summoned his attention; but there was less of comicality in the bewildered expression of his face as he spoke:—"I say, Mr. Nicoll, this is really getting serious. I can't for the life o' me conceive what we're going to do wi' all this money."

On the other hand, the manager, perhaps by reaction from the strain of the day's business, happened to be in an unusually merry mood. "Oh!" he exclaimed, "it's no that hard to find something to do wi' money. You'll be building a palace doon bye one o' these days, and marrying a peer's dochter, or a baronet's, at least. She'll soon show you how to spend your money."

Forbes was silent and meditative, as if unwilling or unable to enter into the fun, but Nicoll was not

to be checked by the apparent lack of sympathy. After a pause of a few seconds, he continued, "There's many

'A penniless lass wi' a lang pedigree,'

that her father would pass down to a commoner, willing to take her off his hands without a dowry."

And then, after another brief pause, he went on to describe very comically two or three well-known men, who had in recent years acquired great wealth, bought estates, built new mansions, or enlarged old ones, and were trying by every artifice to gain rank among the landed gentry of their neighbourhood. Forbes, though not in a particularly merry vein, had been forced to explode in laughter more than once by the irresistible comicality of some touches in Nicoll's description. But when Nicoll seemed at last to have exhausted his fun, Forbes replied in a tone that was good-humoured, but earnest: "Well, I suppose, if that's the kind of expenditure that gives them satisfaction, there's no way of keeping them from it. But I'm afraid, Mr. Nicoll, that you and I will have to find some other way of spending our money."

"Yes, I think you're right there, William," said Nicoll, altering his tone to suit his companion's.

"Now," Forbes went on, "I want to be frank with you, Mr. Nicoll. You must bear, partly, the responsibility of making that sort o' life impossible for me, as I believe it's impossible for yourself. However, I may say, you mustn't take it ill, if I throw the responsibility mainly on your friend, John Downes. I can never tell any one, for I can't quite explain to myself what I owe to his influence."

"I expected that, when I arranged that you were to lodge in the same house with Downes in Edinburgh. I don't think either of us will be ashamed to own the responsibility, and I'm not surprised that he shoulders the biggest share."

"Well, then," Forbes continued, "I want to say just now that the ideals of life developed by the teaching of Downes make the problem we've got to solve rather puzzling. My head's fairly buzzing with all sorts o' plans. But I can't begin to decide on anything till I get an exact idea of the business—its risks and profits, and so on. That's my reason for not making any definite proposal to you before this. I'm afraid you must have thought it strange that I've put off a settlement so long, and that I don't seem any nearer a settlement now than I ever was."

"Don't be offended, William, if I smile," said

Nicoll. "You see, I know the difficulty of your position a good deal better than you can. You must allow me to tell you that it 'ill maybe take you a good while yet to master the situation."

"Then, I see, at all events," said Forbes, "that you won't object to my taking a little while longer."

"As long's you like," replied Nicoll, and rose as if to go.

"Before you go," said Forbes, "I'd like to ask just one question. We're not near the time of yearly balance yet, but I can see that the profits of the business are far larger than I ever imagined. Though we've lived very comfortably at Burnside, a few hundred pounds would make all the income it has required; but father must have had an income far beyond that."

"Yes," said Nicoll, "your father was a wise man in his expenditure as well as in other ways. He might, if he had chosen, lived in a style as splendid as any man, gentle or simple, in the county; but I know, from what he has said to me, that he saw how little all that adds to a man's happiness, how often it leads him rather into misery. I may frankly say now that I thought it best to let you find out gradually the splendour of the fortune you've fallen heir to. I feared that even a douce chiel like you

would be flabbergasted—well, at least somewhat bewildered—if it were flashed on you all at once. So I've watched you gradually realising that it was a good deal more than you had calculated."

"I never calculated it at all," remarked Forbes.

"Well, can't you form some idea now?" his partner asked.

"I confess I can't. I might, of course, make a guess, but it would be but a wild guess at the best."

"Then, I suppose, I must come out with it in plain figures. For a good many years, the clear profits have been always over twenty thousand pounds. Then, as you say, the household expenditure has been moderate. It has never, I think, touched one thousand. In fact, practically, your father has been laying by twenty thousand pounds a year a good long while. And that has all been well invested, and accumulating at compound interest. We can get the exact figures again; but I shouldn't be surprised if you find that you and your mother might retire with a tight little sum of a quarter of a million, and let the mill go."

"There now," exclaimed Forbes, "that's enough for one dose. You'd better let me sleep over it before you administer any more."

"It's your own fault," rejoined Nicoll, "for insist-

ing on such a dose all at once. I was going to deal it out in homœopathic quantities."

At this point, the conversation was interrupted by Mrs. Nicoll entering the office. "Excuse me, William," she said, "for intruding. But I was afraid that absent-minded good-man of mine had forgotten he was to take tea with your mother this evening, and had gone home, taking you with him."

"Oh no, good-wife," exclaimed her husband, "I was keeping it in mind all right. But the truth is, William and I got into a talk on some business matters, and I'm afraid neither of us noticed how time was passing."

"Yes, indeed, Mrs. Nicoll," William joined in, "I fear I was more to blame than your good-man. However, we're ready now, I think."

They all then went over to Burnside, where they spent the evening, as they had done very frequently since Mrs. Forbes became a widow.

Next morning, when William entered the office, he found Mr. Nicoll at his desk opening the mail-matter which had just arrived. "Good morning," he said, as he entered, "you've fairly dumfounded me wi' that tremendous revelation you made last night. I

want to have a talk with you about it again, but we had better put it off till the evening."

"Yes," rejoined Mr. Nicoll, we'll have to put it off. There's enough here," he added, as he pointed to the letters on his desk, "to keep us both busy the best part o' the day." He went on with the work he had on hand, and Forbes retired to his own desk.

At the close of the day's work, the two partners sat down in the office together, as they had done the evening before. Forbes began by saying, "I don't mean to keep you as I did last night. I want merely to 'ask leave,' as we used to say at school. Can you let me away for a few days?"

"Why, of course. I daresay you need a holiday. You've been working too hard, and you'll certainly be the better of a rest."

"Oh! that's not what I meant. I don't think I need a rest exactly. The fact is, I want a few days' leisure to think out the problem of our future arrangement."

"You needn't be in a hurry about that."

"It's just because I don't want to do it in a hurry, that I've thought of taking a few days' leisure for it. I said this morning that you had fairly dumfounded me by what you told me last night. But

that's only half the truth. I was astounded by the vastness of the problem before us, or rather by the vastness of the resources for working it out. But I think I see a good deal clearer the road we have to travel, and we can walk with firmer step than I ever imagined we'd be able to do."

"Where do you propose to go?"

"Well, I thought I couldn't do better than spend a few days with Mr. Downes. That will not only give me leisure to think out the subject, but I feel as if his inspiration would be a help."

After a moment's pause, Mr. Nicoll remarked, "I won't say anything about what your plans may be. I have a pretty good guess of their general drift. And if I'm spared to lend a hand in working them out, life's going to have a glory for me that I scarcely dreamt of before."

Both were silent for a few seconds. Then Mr. Nicoll added, "That may seem what the Yankees call 'tall talk.' But it isn't. It's just the sober sentiment of a very plain Scotsman."

"Thanks," replied Forbes. "I have always taken for granted that you would go in with my ideas. They're your ideas far more than mine, and without your help it would be simply absurd for me to attempt to carry them out."

"Well, then, when do you propose going?"

"This is Friday, and I wouldn't like to disturb Downes on Saturday or Sunday, at least by a sudden visit. I'll drop a note to say that I'm coming on Monday morning.

CHAPTER XVII.

INDUSTRIAL MORALITY.

"...k ye first ..."

—*Matthew* vii. 33

MR. DOWNES was ...ently exhilarated on Saturday evening by William ...es' note. His happy spirits were sustained all through his Sunday's work by the prospect of the coming re-uni... morning, he pushed throug... required immediate attention, ... self free to give up the rema... friendship. The whole of ... spent in a long walk, such as ... wo friend... often enjoyed in former days. The enjo... this occasion was stimulated by a ...entle ...orther... breeze, which braced muscle and nerve and brain, while it gave the atmosphere an unusual transparency, that enhanced the view from many of the points around Arthur's Seat, to which they had been attracted. When they returned, the ... of the

evening air prepared them for enjoying the cheerful blaze of a fire, which the thoughtful landlady had kindled in Mr. Downes' room. They have just disposed of a substantial meal, and are now seated on opposite sides of the fire-place in that mood of restful meditation which is encouraged, if not engendered, by healthy physical comfort.

During the day, conversation had taken an impersonal range after the first few inquiries of friendly courtesy were over. Nothing had therefore been said on the subject, on which Mr. Forbes had specially come to talk with Mr. Downes. But, now, while the two sat in meditative silence gazing into the ever-varying movements of the fire, it seemed as if their thoughts were at last brought home to themselves. Forbes was the first to break the silence, and thus bring the talk round to the immediate problem of his own life.

"I suppose," he said, "you've been wondering sometimes whether I'm intending to go on with my studies."

"Of course," the reply was, "I've thought about it now and then. But I had no means of knowing what you might find it best to do. Naturally, the changes at Burnside must affect your prospects in life very seriously."

"Then you'll not be surprised to learn that I've been a good deal puzzled myself about what I should do."

"Not at all. I shouldn't be surprised if you find yourself obliged to give up the idea of the ministry altogether."

"Well," Forbes explained, "in one sense I'm under no obligation of the kind at all. The circumstances, in which we are left, would enable me to carry out my old intention with ease. But these circumstances bring a certain moral obligation with them. Now, this obligation seems to point to a very different work in life from that of the ministry. The fact is," he added after a pause, "I've been so perplexed, that I asked Mr. Nicoll to let me off for a few days to have a leisurely talk with you on the subject."

"My good fellow," replied Downes, "I'm of course awfully glad to see you, gladder than I can easily tell. But you pay me an extraordi ary compliment. I can't, for the life o' me, see how going to help you to decide. However," he continued, after a moment's reflection, "it was partly, even mainly, the moral aspect of the situation that I was thinking of, when I said you might feel obliged to give up all thought of the ministry."

"Well, then," Forbes went on, "we've got to the same point of view. Now, I thought you would understand, better than any man I know, the peculiar kind of moral obligation that my position imposes on me."

He hesitated a moment. But Downes said simply, "Go on, please. I begin to see more definitely what you're driving at, and it interests me immensely."

"Well," Forbes continued, "to get to the point, it's perhaps best to tell you plump and plain what the position is. It's a case of what, I believe, the French call *l'embarras des richesses.* In plain English, I've fallen into a fortune that I don't know what to do with. Not only is there a princely annual income from the mill; but, as my father has been living on a very moderate expenditure, there's an immense accumulation of unexpended income for many years. Then, my father has left no will, so that we have practically a free hand to dispose of his estate as we think best."

Again Forbes paused, when Downes took the opportunity of breaking in with a good-humoured laugh, "I say, Forbes, you ought to have let me know that it was a merchant-prince that I had to entertain when you were coming. Or rather, I have a crow to pluck with Nicoll for not warning me

beforehand. Here he's allowed you to come and take pot-luck with us in the old way, as if ye were just a divinity student. However," he went on with a kindlier tone in his mirth, "I see you're the same old sixpence. At any rate, if Fortune's turned the sixpence into a guinea—why, the guinea's genuine. You don't seem put up or down about it in the least. I can't find a bit of difference in you. Your old friends, I'm afraid, will be lacking in the requirements of social propriety. We'll be apt to forget your wealth altogether, and treat you as if you were still just one of ourselves."

"I hope you will. My fortune would be a misfortune if you didn't."

"Well," Downes continued, without noticing the interruption, "frankly, my good fellow, I'm more pleased to see what you *are* than to learn what you *have*. I don't know any man that would have taken the matter so coolly. Why, if a windfall like that had dropped into my lap, I believe I'd be dancing a jig or the Highland fling, or cutting some other capers just as inconsistent with clerical character."

"Go on," said Forbes, as Downes came to a stop, "your fun is very enjoyable. The fact is, the comical aspect of the situation overpowers me too at times. More than once I've had a quiet laugh by

myself at the poor divinity student getting transmogrified into a wealthy manufacturer. But the situation's serious as well as comical, and it's the serious aspect that troubles me just now. The comical aspect we can afford to laugh at now and then; the other's a puzzling problem."

"Well," said Downes, "excuse me for taking up so much time with the fun o' the thing. You were going to explain the serious side. I'm not quite sure what shape the problem takes in your mind."

"To begin, then," Forbes explained, "this wealth is not *mine* in any but the shallowest sense in which a man can call a thing his own. It's mine of course by British law, perhaps also by the laws of all civilised nations. But in any deeper sense——, well, we might say, in a Christian sense; but we don't need to take such high ground: I would merely say, as a man that wants to be honest in spirit as well as in the letter of the law, I don't see what claim I can possibly invent to take that wealth for my own use."

"Of course," Downes objected, "you had a claim on your father, and have therefore a claim on his estate."

"Granted," said Forbes at once in reply, "and interpret the claim in the most liberal way you can

for me. Suppose not only that my father would have paid all the expenses of my education; suppose what I certainly didn't expect, what I can't see that I had any right to expect, and what might have been a very doubtful boon—suppose he had provided me with a fair income independent of my own labour. All that's a mere drop in the bucket, and leaves the problem of disposing of his estate just about where it was."

"But," Downes objected again, "unless you get the laws of inheritance altered, this estate is yours; it's your property."

"There's just where the trouble lies," replied Forbes. "I'm not objecting to the laws of property and inheritance. I have no taste, or rather I have no capacity, for the work of a political reformer. I've been thinking a good deal, and (as you know), I've been talking too, on the deeper questions, that is, the moral and spiritual foundations, of law and politics; but I confess frankly that my ideas on the subject are still—well, they're 'an unco raivelled heft,' as our old Kirstie used to say when the kitten had been playing with her knitting for a while. So I leave these problems alone at present."

"I'm glad of that on the whole," Downes remarked. "The great teachers of the world have

been singularly unanimous in setting little store by changes in the external forms of society, that don't grow out of a change in the spirit of social life. I have no patience with your violent radicals, who would always be tinkering at the laws and customs and institutions of a country wherever they find a little bit of imperfection."

"You remind me," said Forbes, "of that capital hit of Andrew Creighton's, when we were talking on this subject here last winter. 'Radicals,' he said, 'seem to fall into the blunder of reading the old medical caution as if it ran, *Fiat experimentum in corpore civili.*'"

"I don't remember that," continued Downes with a smile. "But it's worth remembering. And it's like Andrew: you scarcely ever have a talk with him without hearing some good saying that sticks to you. And he was right there: the body politic, as the old writers called it — the social organism, as they're calling it now—is far too complicated and delicate a bit of organisation to be handled roughly for our clumsy experimenting. It's pretty hard for us to see, through its complicated working, what's to be the upshot of our experiments."

"I've been thinking," Forbes remarked, "that these new ideas we're getting from the evolutionists

will check the radical spirit. They're helping us to realise that society, like any other organism, must grow; it can't jump all at once from childhood to maturity."

"I daresay you're right," replied Downes. "But these ideas are not new. They simply saturate the whole teaching of Jesus with regard to the progress of civilisation. What are His favourite illustrations of the Kingdom or Reign of God—its expansion in society as well as in the individual? They're all drawn from the processes of organic growth in nature."

"Thank you, Downes; I wonder I never thought of that before."

"Why," Downes went on, "the peril and the wrong of reckless radicalism couldn't be more vividly illustrated than in the Parable of the Tares. Your radical revolution is always in danger of doing more harm than good. It may get rid of the tares, but it's at a terrible cost; it's only by destroying the wheat at the same time. The fact is, it's one of the perplexities of human life, that we must not only let well alone, we must sometimes even let ill alone too, just because we can't see how we're to get anything better to take its place in the circumstances. And that means generally, I fancy," he added, as if

explaining his thought to himself, "that the evil in the world is often so inextricably entangled with the good, that you can't tear up the one without tearing up the other too."

A pause of a few seconds followed, which was broken at last by Forbes observing, "Well, you have confirmed me in my purpose to let political reforming alone for the present. I don't see that the line of duty for me just now is to try and get the laws of property altered. That paradox of Proudhon's about property being theft—why, it's simply meaningless to me. The theft—the wrong that may be done to others by a proprietor—doesn't consist in merely owning property; it comes from the use he makes of it, from using for his own selfish gratification what ought to be used for the well-being of others. It's now, when I've got the responsibility of owning wealth thrown upon me, that I begin to realise the difficulty of a rich man entering into the kingdom of heaven. Surely," he continued after another pause, "our Lord couldn't be actuated by the narrow ideas of an Ebionite or a mendicant friar about the intrinsic virtue of poverty. His great soul couldn't have grudged a rich man the possession or the reasonable enjoyment of his wealth."

"Not to interrupt you," Downes broke in, "has it ever struck you that in the Parable of the Talents it's the comparatively poor man—the fellow with only one talent—that appears in the worst light, morally paralysed by a niggardliness that's feckless for good, while it's the rich men that are commended for rising to the requirements of their duty?"

"I'm glad you point that out. It never occurred to me before. And yet that's the parable that seems to me of profoundest meaning for the drift of Christian morals. I suppose it's that parable that has given us the figurative application which is now the common use of the word *talent*."

"I fancy it must be," said Downes. "But—to come back to the point I noticed in the parable—something of the same sort is implied in the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard. There it is the capitalistic landowner, the wealthy employer of labour, that represents the spirit of generous justice, and it is the labourers who fail to rise to his ideal in regard to the remuneration of labour. It's worth noting, too, that the fact of his owning property is not regarded as a moral disadvantage. On the contrary, it is that very fact—the fact of his having a lawful right to do what he will with his own—it is

that gives him the power to carry out the requirements of an ideal justice."

"By the way," Forbes broke in, "did you see from the newspapers how that millionaire ironmaster —what's his name?—misapplied the words of the householder in the parable? It seems he treats his workmen in the most niggardly spirit, refuses to do anything for them but pay their bare wages, while he spends in racehorses and gambling enough to carry out vast improvements in their condition; and he vindicated himself the other day against some criticism by asking, apparently in the indignant tone of an injured man, 'Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?' It would be difficult to find a more monstrous perversion of Scripture language to the very opposite of what it was intended to mean."

Forbes paused, and Downes went on, as if with a fresh look from his old point of view. "Yes, I don't see that the world is likely to gain much by simply abolishing private property. If the communists succeeded in levelling all men down to the rank of the fellow who had only one talent, the world in general might very probably be governed by the same niggardly spirit, and would soon relapse into material as well as spiritual poverty."

"On the other hand," exclaimed Forbes, with young enthusiasm in his look and voice, "level men up to the spiritual rank of the fellow who had the five talents, and I believe their feverish eagerness in the pursuit of wealth will very soon cool down. In fact they will rather dread the possession of great wealth under a sense of its tremendous responsibilities. But," checking himself, he added, "we're travelling pretty far from the question."

"Oh! never mind," said Downes, with a faint laugh. "The pleasantest conversation is one that isn't tied to a point by any logical tether, but just runs round all the curves, and jinks about the zig-zags of our natural thinking. At any rate I rather think I'm to blame for leading the talk so far afield."

"No, no. It was I that set the ball rolling away from the mark. I remember I said something about having no taste or capacity for political reform. And I'm not going to spend my energy in a crusade against the laws of property. Besides, no change likely to be made in those laws is going to help me out o' my present difficulty. This wealth that's bothering me, *is* mine by existing law. I can't alter that fact. But I don't think the wealth is mine except in law. I mean, it's not mine as if I had a

right to use it for my own personal gratification. If I were to use it in that way, even in such gratifications as a man of cultured refinement would choose, I'd be constantly haunted by the truth there is in Proudhon's paradox, I'd feel that I was making use of wealth that didn't in righteousness belong to me. Of course, I might follow the example of some of our rich men, who are guided by their own evangelical sympathies, as well as by evangelical advisers. I might live in a style of generous hospitality; I might give generous subscriptions to all sorts of religious and benevolent schemes; I might marry a wife of kindred sentiments, who would play the Lady Bountiful in our parish. Well, I acknowledge there's a charm in a life of that style, and I can understand how it satisfies some really good men, even when they have never done a hand's turn to produce the wealth they are distributing. But for me it would still mean that I was disposing of wealth which was not rightly mine, and putting it out o' the way o' those who have a far juster claim to it than any I can have. For, to be honest, there isn't a poor laddie or lassie working in the Arderholm mill for ten shillings a week who hasn't done infinitely more to make that wealth than I can

pretend to have done—except, of course, for the past few weeks."

Downes had been listening intently with thoughtful look, while his eyes were fixed upon the fire. After a pause of a few seconds, he turned to Forbes eagerly and called, "Go on, please. I can't tell you how I'm interested. I begin to see what you are aiming at, I think."

"Well," Forbes went on, "the long and the short of it is, that I think all this surplus wealth should go in some way to benefit the working-people who have been co-operating with my father in making it. That's my idea, not only about the immense surplus accumulated, but about the income, far beyond the reasonable wants of any man, that the mill is likely to yield in the future. Of course I haven't worked out any definite plan yet, at least in detail. Before that can be done we'll need exact figures before us, and then, of course, Mr. Nicoll will have to be consulted. Without him, I needn't say, I can do nothing."

"No fear about him," said Downes. "I can speak for him, I think."

"Oh!" replied Forbes, smiling, "he has spoken for himself. At least he gave me a pretty broad hint before I left."

"Well, then," said Downes, "do you know what occurs to me? Sunday after next I'm to get an entire rest. In the morning a missionary from Central Africa is going to tell my people about his work. For the evening, your old friend Andrew Creighton—he has just been licensed, and he has promised me a sermon. You'll stay with me, then, this week. We can talk the matter over a little further in a general way, and you'll have a chance of seeing Creighton and other friends. I think I may get off with you by Monday afternoon or Tuesday morning at latest, and spend the best part of next week at Arderholm. I don't see very well how I can be of any particular help; but I would like immensely to know what you're going to do." Then, looking at his watch, he exclaimed, "Why! I didn't know it was so late. It's time we were off to bed."

The two then parted for the night. Next morning Forbes wrote to Mr. Nicoll at some length explaining this arrangement, and indicating more definitely the outline of his scheme for the future.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Christian Aristocracy.

"There was a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. But Jesus called them and said, 'Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and the great exercise authority upon them. Not so shall it be among you: but whosoever shall become great among you, let him be your servant; and whosoever will be first among you, let him be your slave; even as the Son of Man came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.'"

—*Matthew* xx. 25-28 (*Luke* xxii. 24-26).

The plan, which Mr. Downes had suggested, kept him unusually busy during the remainder of the week. He had not only his ordinary parochial work, including preparation for the services of Sunday, but also the arrangements necessary to enable him to be away during the following week. He had, therefore, few opportunities of returning to the subject which was uppermost in his guest's mind. His guest also was thereby left a great deal to himself, and spent his time mainly in re-visiting some of the familiar scenes of his student-life and renewing

some of its friendships. The effect upon him was exceedingly beneficial. Though brought into fresh environment, he still had constantly before him the great problem he was called to solve; but the problem no longer oppressed him like a stifling atmosphere which he was forced to breathe. He felt as if he had escaped from the atmosphere for a time, and could thus analyse it coolly and freely now for the purpose of finding some method by which it might be purified. It was under this exhilarating change that he returned to Arderholm with Mr. Downes at the beginning of the following week.

Mr. Downes went as Forbes' guest for the first time, Mr. Nicoll giving up the claim of an older friendship under the conviction that the arrangement would bring a cheerful gleam for a few days into Mrs. Forbes' lonely life. Mr. and Mrs. Nicoll, however, spent a good deal of their time—the evenings always—at Burnside. After tea, the ladies left the gentlemen for a while, so that these had an opportunity of discussing freely the subject which had brought them together. They had no serious difficulty in coming to an agreement. The main outlines of their plan, in fact, were satisfactorily sketched on the first evening. As soon as they were left alone that evening, Mr. Downes began, "I feel

it implies a good deal of presumption on my part to interfere in a matter in which I have no concern, and which I'm not likely to understand half so well as either of you."

"Why," said Nicoll, "we can't do without you. Suppose Willie and I have a quarrel, who's to patch it up?"

"A capital idea!" exclaimed Forbes. "I was stupid enough never to provide for possible differences. We couldn't have a better way of settling them. But I'm pretty sure," he added, turning to Nicoll, "that Mr. Downes can give us some useful hints. An outsider often sees a point better than those inside. At any rate, both points of view are best."

"All right, then," said Downes, "I've already told you how keenly I'm interested in what you're about."

There was a moment's pause, as if all were hesitating about further procedure, when Forbes said, "I suppose you're expecting me to begin. But I don't see that I have a right to take a leading part, except for the fact that I'm my father's son—and heir-at-law. In fact, all through the talks for years back, that have brought us to this point, I feel often as if I had been a presumptuous young upstart, setting

up my ideas so confidently before men who are so much older and know so much more than I. Perhaps it's some excuse for me that my ideas all seem to me only an echo of yours. Certainly, the convictions that are guiding me now would never have come to me at all but for the friendship I've enjoyed with you both."

"Excuse me for interrupting you, Willie," said Mr. Nicoll; "and, by the way, excuse me for calling you still by the old familiar name you had as a boy."

"Excuse *me* for interrupting you, Mr. Nicoll," Willie broke in; "but I do wish both you and Mr. Downes would stick to the old style."

"No, no," exclaimed Mr. Nicoll. "That'll never do. I know I'm sometimes betrayed in our friendly chats to forget that you've outgrown your boyhood long ago. But that sort o' thing has to come to an end sometime in everybody's life, and it's high time I was getting rid o' the bad habit in speaking to you. What would any of our customers think if they heard me calling you Willie to your face? Why, it would create as much consternation as if I were to pat Downes on the shoulder and call him Jack at a meeting of his congregation."

Both Downes and Forbes laughed heartily at Nicoll's comical suggestion. Then Downes took up

the point in dispute. "I think," he said, "we'd better just fall into the sensible practice of plain, douce Scotsmen that meet on terms of friendly equality, and address one another by our family names, without unnecessary appendages."

"I'm quite willing," said Forbes, "if Nicoll agrees."

"That's all right, Forbes," replied Nicoll. "But now let us return to the point you raised a minute ago. I can't own the fatherhood of your convictions altogether. So far as I'm concerned, there's no reason for you taking up an attitude of such humility. Really and truly, I don't see that you can be more indebted to me than I am to you for helping me to clearer conceptions of industrial morality. I rather think, too, that Downes feels very much as I do."

"That's really the case, Forbes," said Downes. "I think you may look on our talks as a fair game of 'give and take' all round."

"I'm not going to accuse you of flattery," said Forbes, laughing. "But I can't help thinking that you allow your generosity to carry you beyond all bounds in your over-estimate of my contributions to our friendship. However, we needn't beat about the bush any longer, or we'll never start the hare at all.

We'd better, then, get to work at once. Well, the leading idea that guides me in what I'm going to propose—and I'm sure that it's an idea I've got from you two—my leading idea is, that industrial work is bound by the requirements of the highest morality and religion, just like any other sphere of human labour. I understand, then," he continued, as he turned to Nicoll, "that you and I are going to carry on the work of the mill, as Downes (for example) is expected to carry on the work of the ministry, with a desire to be of some service to our fellow-men rather than for the purpose of enriching ourselves. Of course, 'the labourer is worthy of his hire,' and, if we are to labour in the service of others, we may claim, like themselves, a fair wage for our labour. But I take it that we're to be 'content with our wages,' and that we're not going to use the splendid profits of our business in living a life of luxurious self-indulgence."

Here he paused, as if appealing to Nicoll, who simply said, "Yes, we're pretty well agreed on these general principles. I think we may get to details at once."

"I'm afraid," Forbes pleaded with a sort of regretful tone in his voice, "I've gone off into sermonising, treating you to a string of mere platitudes."

"No, no," exclaimed Nicoll, with quick kindliness. "I wasn't impatient for the details. You're quite right to keep us from losing sight of general principles. We can always see particulars more clearly when we turn the light of a general principle on them. In fact, we don't see them properly at all till we do that."

"Well, then," Forbes continued, "there are two problems we've got to solve. One is to dispose of the big accumulation you spoke of. The other is to dispose of the annual income for the future."

"Excuse me for interrupting you again," said Nicoll. "I see you've got a firm grip of the situation. But there's a difficulty that's troubling me and I feel as if it must confuse all my ideas till we get it out o' the way. It's your mother's interest, I mean. Of course, you've some scheme all clear about that. It would help to clear my ideas if I knew what you propose."

"I was just coming to that," replied Forbes. "I've sounded mother pretty well about our plans. She'll make no difficulty, except about the amount reserved for her."

"In any case," urged Nicoll, "she must be allowed a generous share."

"That's just where the difficulty lies. She will be

sure to complain that we're too generous. However, a provision must be made for her, that will put her beyond the risks of business life. What I propose is, that a certain sum—say £25,000—should be taken out of the accumulated fund, and invested for her in first-class securities. I suggest that sum, because it should yield her about a thousand a year."

"Well," said Nicoll; "in the circumstances she'll be extremely moderate if she's satisfied with that amount, and you ought certainly to insist that she should not be satisfied with less. But suppose your mother agrees to this, it still leaves the bulk of the fund untouched."

"Well," Forbes chimed in; "I would suggest that it be left untouched—for the present at least. I can see that, as we go on, many schemes may be found useful, or even necessary, for working out our general idea; and we might be unable to carry them out if we had nothing but annual income to draw from. In any case, however, don't you think, Mr. Nicoll, from your larger business-experience, that even a business, that has been so successful as my father's, would be none the worse of keeping, like the bank, a reserve to fall back on in hard times—an insurance fund, in fact, to provide against accidents?"

"You're a long-headed fellow, Willie—excuse me,

Forbes," said Nicoll smiling. "You're going to beat us all in sound practical intelligence."

"No more of your flatteries, now, Nicoll," was Forbes' reply. "We're down to business now."

"Will you allow me a question?" Downes asked here. "I'm an outsider, and a minister. Naturally, I'm interested in the social aspect of your schemes quite as much at least as in their immediate bearing on your business. I'm wondering if your schemes aim at any improvement in the social life of your workers."

"Certainly," was the prompt reply. "Our object will be to improve the *whole* life of the workers, to give them, in fact, a chance, such as their wealthier neighbours have, of entering into the enjoyment of our civilisation, not only in its material, but in its higher—its intellectual and moral and religious aspects. We want to see them better fed, better clad, better housed, and in the fullest sense of the term better educated. Ultimately, it is possible we may undertake the virtual rebuilding of the whole village, perhaps with some view to architectural effect, but certainly with some regard for sanitary conditions. However, we'll not frighten people by proceeding to turn the world upside down all at once. There's one institution I would aim at as soon

as possible,—an institution containing a good library, a reading-room stocked with some of the best periodicals; a gymnasium, with baths; rooms for billiards, chess, draughts, and similar games. I would have all these in a building of some style, such, in fact, that its very architecture would exert an elevating effect on the people who used it. Such a building is most effective in the middle of a fine public park. The park has its own beneficial uses, and there should be no difficulty in securing a few acres suitable."

"I only hope," said Downes, "that you'll get your plan started soon."

"The sooner the better," Nicoll chimed in. "But now, to get on, what about the annual income?"

"Well," Forbes replied; "as I said, I would try and keep the accumulated fund intact, and therefore I would take all improvements, as far as possible, out of income. And I would do it in such a way as to make the workers feel that they were paying for the improvements themselves."

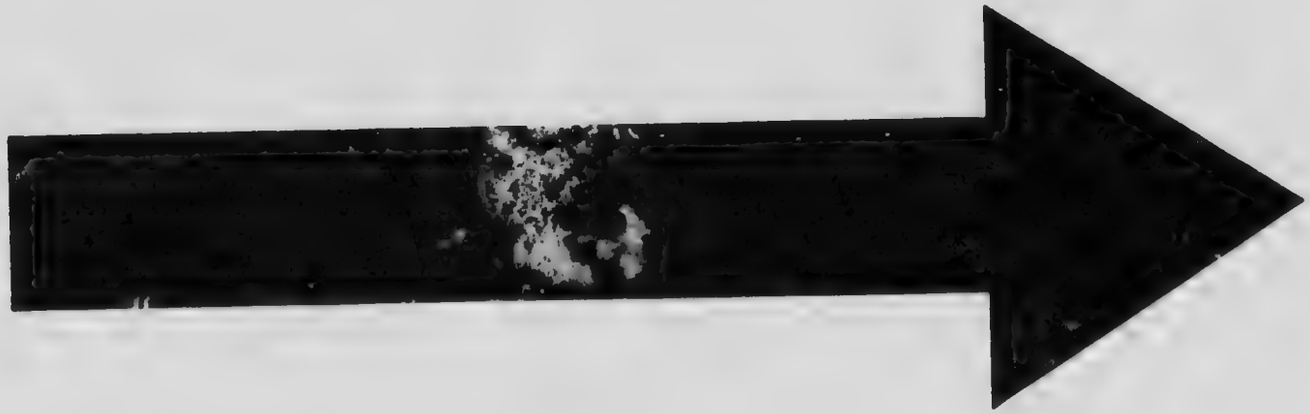
"Wait a bit," exclaimed Nicoll. "How's that to be done? I'm not quite sure that I follow you here."

"I daresay I'm mixing things up a little," said Forbes apologetically. "I'm not confused in my

own mind. I know what I mean. But it would have been better if I had drawn up a connected statement, bringing out the different points in proper order."

"No, no," Nicoll rejoined. "The plan you're taking's the best. We'll manage to thresh out the subject pretty thoroughly in the long run. A bit breeze o' talk now and then helps to blow away the chaff and to get at the corn. Now, to come to the point. Of course, it's quite possible to make the workers feel that they're contributing to the improvements we're going to carry out, but I'm not quite sure how you're going to do it."

"Well," Forbes explained; "you and I are agreed that, in a certain sense, and a very real sense, the workers should be made to feel that they are partners with us in this concern. Of course, I don't propose that we should alter our legal relation. In law, I think, for their own sake more than for ours, they should continue to realise that we stand in the old relation of employer and employee. Whatever benefit comes to them above the bare legal wages of their labour must come from both parties recognising that they are bound by higher obligations to one another than any that they can be whipped into performing by the strong hand of law."



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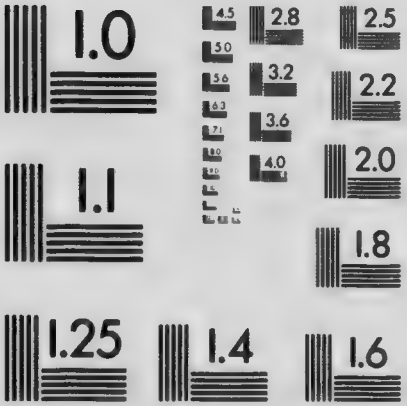

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"Go on," said Nicoll, as Forbes paused. "I begin to see what you're driving at."

"Well, then, so far as our legal contract with the workers is concerned, we shall continue to guarantee them only the current wages of the trade. Of course, these vary somewhat with circumstances, and we'll try to be as generous as our circumstances will allow; but to protect them as well as ourselves from the risks of industrial life, it is essential that our business should not be burdened by any legal obligation in the matter of wages beyond the rates that other employers find to be safe for their purposes. If the rates are safe for *them*, then for *us* they ought to be just about as secure as any financial arrangements can be made in human life."

"You're right," Nicoll remarked. "And," he continued, "however Quixotic our schemes may appear from the ordinary business point of view, they must be based on thoroughly sound business principles."

"Very good, then. So far we're agreed again. Now, of course, you and I must get a fair wage like the rest of the workers. I'll speak about that immediately. But our wages will leave the surplus profits very much as they have been. Now, what I propose is, that a bonus—a substantial addition to

the legal wages of the workers—should be a first charge on our annual surplus. This year, if the surplus is equal to the average you spoke of——"

"It's going to be more," Nicoll interrupted.

"All right. We can be more exact when we've made up our balance. But if it's not below the average, we might make an addition of twenty-five per cent. to the wages."

"Yes," said Nicoll with a hesitating drawl in his voice, while he calculated mentally. "Yes; that would still leave a respectable balance, but not a balance big enough for any formidable scheme of improvement."

"That's just the point. And therefore I would make the bonus ten per cent., or at most fifteen—unless," he added, "you would like to go higher."

"No," replied Nicoll. "I prefer the lower percentage you've mentioned. In any case it seems better, at least to us Scotsmen, to 'ca' canny at first.' For the success of our business, too, it 'ill be safer to increase the bonus, as we may do, by and by, than to be obliged to draw in our horns."

"Well, in this way," Forbes continued, "there 'ill be a good sum available for improvements, and the workers will soon come to see that every benefit they're getting, whether private or public—I mean

every benefit to each of them individually, and to them all as a community—must depend on the heartiness with which they work along with us in making our business successful."

"Allow me," said Downes, "to put in a word here. I know working-people in a way that you have scarcely a chance of knowing them; and I'm not speaking beyond my knowledge, when I say that, to improve their industry, you don't need, as a rule, to give them any encouragement but the cheery hope of improving their own condition, instead of the cheerless prospect of merely adding to the profits of their employers. But, of course, that has been said over and over again."

"Why, yes," said Nicoll, "the statement may be common enough in economical discussions, just because it expresses a very obvious and universal fact in human nature. But," he continued, turning to Forbes, "to come back to business, I suppose we needn't discuss at present the further disposal of the annual surplus. I am heartily at one with you about always giving a good big slice—perhaps in the long run we may give the biggest slice—as an addition to the wages for every worker, just to spend as he or she thinks best. But other schemes are not so immediately urgent."

"I'm glad you take that view about the addition to the wages; and I'm quite prepared, even this year, to make it as generous as you may think safe for a beginning. But the other schemes, that I've been thinking about, can scarcely be discussed yet to any purpose. In fact, some of them will require us to gather a good deal of information beforehand, if we want to know exactly what we're doing—to go about it intelligently, I mean. For instance, the most important I can think of is an insurance fund to provide against sickness and old age, as well as death. This provision shouldn't be received by the workers as a gift of charity, but as a property they have honourably earned by their own industry and thrift. I would therefore calculate the bonus every year in such a way as to show the workers that the premium on their insurance policy is deducted from the bonus. But, of course, a scheme of this kind would require the advice of an experienced actuary; and, as we want to go on sound business principles, we ought to get the opinion of one of the highest scientific authorities on insurance problems."

"I agree with you in everything," said Nicoll. "I suppose, then," he added, as he rose to go, "we may leave all these details over for discussion at some other time."

"Stop a moment," called Forbes, "we haven't settled the amount of our own wages yet."

"Oh!" replied Nicoll, "that can lie over too. I'm quite content wi' the wages I've got. Besides," he added, looking at his watch, "it's high time I was going. You two have just come from Edinburgh, and it's late hours. Remember we keep early hours in Arderholm."

"Very well," said Forbes, "we can settle this to-morrow evening. You and Mrs. Nicoll are to spend your evenings with us all the time Downes is here."

Next morning, Forbes had some talk with his mother for the purpose of explaining that part of his plan, which directly affected her. He found her still inclined to protest against the proposal to set apart such a large amount for her use. But he also took an opportunity of seeing Downes in private, and begging him to use his influence for the purpose of reconciling his mother to the proposal. Accordingly, during the day, Downes had a long conversation with Mrs. Forbes on various topics, such as were naturally suggested by his own work, as well as by her position. She had already begun to enjoy his society. She was charmed by his unprofessional, his thoroughly human, manners in language and conduct. She felt herself growing keenly

interested in the peculiar work of his parish, and catching some of his enthusiasm for the lofty social ideals by which his work was inspired. He said not a word with the direct object of consoling her for her loss. Far less did he dream of lecturing her on the duty of resignation to the decrees of Providence. But, incidentally, in speaking of his work, he gave her an insight into the sufferings of the poor; and she had to picture to herself the lot of widows with none of the external comforts, none of the kindly compensations, which she enjoyed. He led her on to talk of the great work which her son had planned, and without any hint of dictating her duty in the matter, he made her realise what she might do to help on the work. It seemed to her as if the days of idle mourning had come to an end; and with the matured energy, which she felt in her still, she saw, opening before her, a life of useful activity such as, she imagined, had been closed to her for ever.

In the evening after tea, the three gentlemen were left alone again, but only on making a promise to the ladies that they would get through their talk somewhat more expeditiously than on the previous evening. Accordingly, as soon as the ladies had withdrawn, Forbes turned to Nicoll and began, "The only point to be settled, I think, is our relative

position in the business, and the remuneration we are each to get for our services."

"Well, that needn't keep us long."

"I hope not. We've already agreed, in an informal sort of way, that we're partners. I'm sure that, if my father had lived, he would have taken you in as a partner, even if he had looked forward to Jamie taking his own place ultimately. I know what he thought of you, and ——."

"Well, well," Nicoll interrupted, "I'll not deny that your father—just man that he was—did throw out a hint about my getting a share in the business."

"I have the impression," Forbes urged, "that the proposal went a good deal further than a mere hint."

"Oh! well," Nicoll admitted, "I daresay the matter was practically settled; but I told your father—the fact is, of course, in the state of his health and Jamie's the legal formalities had just to be postponed. But the subject's not worth bringing up again. I'm quite willing to work on as a servant under you just as I did under your father."

"But I'd feel that such an arrangement was radically unjust," exclaimed Forbes with more emphasis than he had used before in the conversation. He then added in calmer tone, "Of course, if you'll allow me again to echo some of your own

ideas and Downes's, I take for granted that we both consider ourselves servants—not you under me, or I under you. I take for granted, too, that, so far as we claim the right to be masters in our business, we do so, not on the mere ground that we can exercise authority over the workers, ordering them about to do certain things, but on the only ground on which Christian morality can base a rightful primacy—on the ground that we are going to work in the service of the others in a far truer sense than that in which they can be said to be working in our service."

"Why, Forbes," said Downes, "you needn't flatter me by crediting me with your ideas. If they're mine at all, they never rang with such a clear tone to my own mind as they get from you. But now," he added, "I think you two gentlemen are pretty well agreed. Whether as servants or as masters, you understand that you're working together on a footing of kindly equality, and"—this was said specially to Nicoll—"that must take legal shape in the form of a partnership."

"All right, Downes," said Nicoll, "you were to be arbiter: so I must abide by your decision."

"Why," Downes explained, "there was no difference to arbitrate about. I just stated what was evidently your own understanding."

"Well, well, so be it," rejoined Nicoll. "We'll put our informal partnership into legal shape. Let's see what that means."

"First of all, then," Forbes resumed, "about the property, I mean the real estate, the stock, the funds, everything in fact that my father has left. I'm in doubt about the conditions under which it should be held; and I'm such a novice in all these things, that I must just be guided by wiser heads."

"Of course," Nicoll remarked, "we'll have to take legal advice on a good many points to see that everything's quite sound in law, else there might be no end of trouble in store for us some day. But, as far as I can see at present, we can't hit upon a better plan than to let the property stand just as it is, that is, just as it has fallen to you and your mother by inheritance."

"I'm not sure that that would be just," Forbes objected.

"I'm sure that it would be—perfectly just," was the reply. "The contract of partnership needn't do more than stipulate the share I'm to get in the profits."

"Well," Forbes continued, "as I'm doubtful about the property, suppose we leave that alone for the present. On the other point I propose that you

and I draw an equal share from the yearly income of the mill. I'm a little timid about giving offence by the pettiness of the sum I'm offering you, but I'm quite willing to go farther, if you like. I suggest a thousand a year."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Nicoll with a vehemence that for the moment startled both Forbes and Downes. But they were immediately relieved by his going on to explain, "What am I to do with a thousand pounds a year? I find I can't spend the half o' that."

"Well, now, Nicoll," said Forbes, "I've thought a good deal over this pom.. so that I'm not speaking rashly. I'll be content with less too. But there are a good many reasons for what I propose. First and foremost, this scheme will probably lead you and me into a good many expenses which it will be better for us, in every way, to pay out of our private income. I don't think we should be in the position of not being able to do generously things that may be helpful to the general scheme, or of being obliged always to apply for a special grant for such expenses."

"Well," replied Nicoll, "I confess I hadn't been thinking of that. But I feel as if the arrangement were somewhat unfair for me. Don't mistake me, however. I don't mean that you're not offering me

a fair salary—a fair share of the profits. On the contrary, the arrangement seems to me unfair just because it's too generous. It doesn't give me a chance of making any sacrifice at all to carry out your idea. Folks will say, 'No credit to Nicoll for going in with such a scheme; it doubles his income.'"

"But," Forbes objected, "you're overlooking the sacrifice that you're really making. In fact, it's such a sacrifice that I feel no little shame in proposing it; and I wouldn't have thought of it if I hadn't known that our whole scheme is yours far more than mine, and would never have occurred to me at all but for the ideals of life that I owe to you and Downes. You seem to be forgetting that my father, as you admit, had intended to make you his partner, and that mother and I could never have dreamt of asking you to continue your services in any other capacity. Now, in common decency, it would have been impossible to offer you a share that would not have given you at least three or four times the income I'm asking you to be content with. The truth is, folks are more likely to pitch into me for offering you such a petty remuneration for your services.—— But," he added, after a momentary pause, "we're forgetting that we agreed to make Downes umpire in our disputes. Let's refer the question to him."

"Very good," replied Nicoll.

At this appeal Downes seemed to be taken aback, and answered at first somewhat diffidently, "I confess, when you spoke of my being referee, I thought you were only half in earnest; at least, I didn't anticipate such an important question being referred to me."

"But you accepted the position," said Forbes.

"Scarcely," replied Downes. "I only didn't protest."

"Well," argued Forbes, "that's the same thing."

"I'm afraid you can't get out of it now, Downes," said Nicoll.

"Well, well," said Downes, with a laughing simulation of impatience, "'he that will tae Cupar maun tae Cupar.' If you will have your own way, you'll just have to be content wi' my crude ideas. And here they are. First and foremost, I advise you both not to bother your heads over what people may say about your plans. You must make up your minds to criticism; and some o' the criticism may be very mean, questioning the disinterestedness o' what you're doing altogether. It's practically a universal superstition that competitive selfishness is not only legitimate, but the only possible motive, in trade. You'll find it very hard, therefore, to get

men in general convinced that you can have any other motive in the plans you're going to adopt. There are niggardly souls in plenty who will not shrink from insinuating that, if the whole truth were known, it would be found that you were taking pretty good care to feather your own nests, and so on, and so on."

"Oh! never mind about that, Downes," Nicoll broke in cheerily. "I think our shoulders are broad enough to carry burdens of that sort."

"Don't be too sure, Nicoll," was the reply. "It isn't a broad shoulder, it's a thick skin, that's insensitive to that sort o' jagging. And I know that neither of you is thick-skinned, or ever likely to be. That's what makes me afraid you may feel these things more keenly than you imagine. However, I hope, and believe too, that there'll be a strong chorus of approval to drown the voices of the croakers."

Then, as Downes hesitated, Forbes remarked, "It's well to warn us against these things. I daresay they'll be pretty hard to bear at the best. But now, let's hear your decision on the question we've referred to you."

"Well, then," replied Downes. "I don't want you to consider yourselves bound by my opinion;

but I'll tell you what I thought as you were disputing. There were two points, you will remember, on which you seemed to differ. The first was an arrangement about the property which Forbes' father had acquired by the work of his life. I understand," he said, turning to Forbes, "you feel as if in justice Nicoll ought to have a share in this property. Now, if you're going to set aside the legal disposition of the property, and open up the question of abstract justice in the matter, you will introduce a very formidable complication into the problem you're taking in hand. Well, that seems to me not only inadvisable, but unnecessary. The important question is about the use to be made of the property. On that point you are both thoroughly agreed. I don't see that it can matter much under what legal form the property is held, for the present at least. I agree, therefore, with Nicoll, that it will simplify matters just to let the property remain as it stands in law. You must give Nicoll an opportunity of trusting to your justice and generosity in carrying out faithfully the general spirit of your plans."

"Well," replied Forbes, "I acknowledge the force of what you say; and I meant it to be understood that I accept your view, if Nicoll is satisfied."

"Oh! that's all right," said Nicoll, smiling.

"Now, let's hear the decision of the learned judge on the other point."

"Well, now, Nicoll," was the reply, "I think you yourself felt the force of what was urged by Forbes. I confess it pleased me immensely, as showing his sound practical sense in this affair. You're not taking a vow of poverty, or following any impracticable hallucination like a mendicant friar. Now, I know from experience how a man is hampered, even in planning social reforms, by a narrow income, and I advise you strongly to give in to Forbes' proposal. In fact, I think you may both find the income he proposes too small for your requirements. However, you'll learn about that best by trying it for a year or two."

Forbes, who was natually pleased with the decision, remarked, laughing, "I was going to call out, 'A second Daniel!' But it would be rather inappropriate to quote Shylock in this connection."

"But," replied Downes, joining in Forbes' merriment, "the phrase is turned against Shylock in the play."

"It would be better," said Nicoll, continuing the fun, "to call your decision a judgment of Solomon. You've taken the child of contention, and fairly sliced the 'puir bairn' in two, giving each of us a

half.——Man, Downes," he added after a moment, "why is it you don't shine in the Church Courts?"

"I don't care for that phase of ecclesiastical life."

"But, my good fellow, who could beat you at those compromises that are the favourite resolutions of quarrelsome questions in presbyteries and synods and assemblies; I mean resolutions that seem to settle a quarrel by deciding nothing, leaving both parties just about where they stood before?"

"I hope," said Downes with a smile, "that's not to be the issue in the present case."

"Oh no!" exclaimed Nicoll at once. "Excuse my joke. I didn't mean it to be taken in that way. I think Forbes and I are both thoroughly satisfied."

"Yes," Forbes assented; "thoroughly."

The conversation then passed to indifferent matters for a short time, after which the three friends parted for the night. The next evening they spent the whole of their time with the ladies in a somewhat rambling talk about the projects which were being taken in hand. Both of the ladies had, of course, been already pretty well informed about the projects, so that little explanation was required. In the course of the talk, however, Mrs. Forbes returned to her previous objection. She pleaded still that she couldn't see what an old woman was ever going to do

with the large allowance provided for her. "But," she added, "men understand these things better than women, and I've no doubt your proposal for me is all for the best. At any rate, I'm not going to make any difficulty in the way of your work."

"It's real good of you, mother," said her son, "to go in with us in our plans. But you musn't speak of yourself as an old woman for a long time yet, or folks 'll begin to think that I'm getting up in life too."

"Havers, Willie," the mother replied, "ye're but a laddie yet. But it's true I don't feel a bit old."

"Why should you?" asked Mrs. Nicoll. "I'm sure you look younger than I do."

"Come now, Annie," was the reply. "You're thinking 'there's nae fules like auld fules.' But you can't take me in wi' that sort o' flattery. But, as I was saying, I don't feel a bit old yet, and if I'm allowed to take part in this work, I feel as if it would make me quite young again."

"You don't know what a young life it puts into me too," said Downes. "I'll go back to work in my poor parish with a hope I've scarcely ever had in my life before. Only," he added, as if checking himself, "I'll feel that any sermon I can preach will be but a

poor affair compared with the sermon you're all going to preach here by this great work."

"Now, Downes," said Nicoll, "don't begin to tickle our vanity that way. You're making far too much of what we're going to do. Arderholm's but a wee bit o' a place, and the world's big."

"That doesn't matter," was the quick reply. "The big world's shaken, not by a force that's dissipated over a wide area, but by an effective blow struck at one point. If it won't seem like sermonising, I'd say that a little bit of honest work in any corner of the Lord's vineyard—that's what tells in extending His Kingdom."

"James," said Nicoll's wife, "don't you remember the legend of the cathedral that was lost to Christendom, and then found again, not by knightly adventurers or even by learned divines, but by a poor woodman cutting down the trees that had grown up around it in the ages of neglect?"

"Thanks, Mrs. Nicoll, I'll remember that again," said Downes. "Has it ever struck you that the Lord's own work, though it has revolutionised the world, was limited to a very narrow field? It went little beyond the villages of Galilee. There was a profound meaning in His recognition of the fact,

that His mission was confined to the lost sheep of the House of Israel."

"Thanks to yourself, Downes," Nicoll remarked. "You cheer a fellow, too, when he's discouraged by the narrow limits of all that he can do even at his best. As you were talking, I couldn't help thinking that the Master recognises a limitation of work in time as well as in space. There's a night comes, He says, to every man's work. In His spirit, therefore, we ought to set about what we're taking in hand as soon as possible."

"The sooner the better," said Mrs. Forbes. "I'm the oldest of you all, and I'd like to see the blessing of this work before I've done with it."

Soon after this, the party broke up for the night. Downes remained at Burnside till Friday morning, when he was obliged to return to Edinburgh. A great part of his time, except during the evenings, was naturally spent with Mrs. Forbes. After he left, she said to her son, "The Bible tells us to be hospitable, for then we may sometimes entertain an angel unawares. I think, Willie, we've had that blessing this week, though it was na unawares wi' me. But I feel it more now he's gone."

CHAPTER XIX.

Industrial Immorality.

"Why do they prate of the blessings of Peace? We have made them a curse,
Pickpockets, each hand lusting for all that is not its own."

Tennyson's "Maud."

James Nicoll has told us in a previous chapter that Mary Boyd was an intimate companion of his wife. Naturally, therefore, on hearing of the disaster to the bank in which Mr. Boyd's fortune was invested, Mrs. Nicoll was among the first to show sympathy with her unfortunate friend. At first, when the news of the calamity arrived, its real extent was unknown. For a short time, therefore, Mary and her father were able to cherish the hope that a little might be saved from the wreck—enough, at least, to save them from utter destitution. But even this dull hope was soon swept away. Official reports on the condition of the bank showed that its wreck was so complete as to involve the utter ruin of a large proportion of the shareholders. Shortly after this

became known, Miss Boyd came to see the friend who had been her chief adviser as well as comforter. After some ordinary greetings, she began an explanation. "It's all settled now, Mrs. Nicoll," she said. "Father has got a discharge from the liquidators of the bank."

"Well, what did they arrange?" Mrs. Nicoll asked.

"You know," was the reply, "we had nothing left us but our house and furniture. Well, houses at Inverarder bring a good price; so, of course, we couldn't expect to be allowed to keep ours. So father had to make it over to them. But we're to be allowed to stay in it till Whitsunday, as the season's over at any rate; and we're to get keeping our furniture besides."

"Well, Mary, you know the worst now, though I'm sorry I can't think of anything more comforting to say."

"But do you know, Mrs. Nicoll, I feel, what I've only heard said before, that it's a real relief just to know the worst. The suspense was far harder to bear."

"Well, dear, I'm glad you have that little comfort. But it's a very small crumb, and I'm afraid it won't last very long."

"No, indeed. It's that outlook that I scarcely dare to face. And yet I have to face it. I've fortunately a few pounds that I've saved out o' my father's allowances, and, of course, I've been trying to make them go as far as I can. But when they're gone, I'm sure I don't know where we're to get another penny."

"Mary, dear," said her friend with moistened eye, "I can feel for you. Yours is very much the position in which I was placed by my father's death." But feeling that it was not passive sympathy, but practical advice and encouragement that was needed, Mrs. Nicoll continued, after a moment's reflection, "We'll just have to put our heads together, and find out what's best to be done. Has your father ever spoken about going into business again? He's not an old man."

"No, that's true. There's many a man active in business that's a good deal older than he is. And sometimes he does make a joke on the subject. I've heard him say, with a laugh, that he's not too old to put on his apron and go behind the counter again. But though I sometimes join in the fun to keep up his spirits, I can see quite well that it's mere fun with him, he never means it in earnest. As he says himself, he has no money to set him up in business,

and even if he had, where could he go? He has sold out his business here; so it would never do for him to set up an opposition-shop, even if there was any chance of succeeding.

"But perhaps he could try some other occupation."

"Of course. We've talked about that too. But there's no use thinking about it at present. You haven't seen my father for some time; he seems to shrink from meeting his old friends. But if you were to see him as I do, you would feel real pity for him. Do you know, he has never taken a decent meal since he heard about the failure o' the bank? Often he comes down in the morning as if he had never closed an eye all night, and I can't tempt him to eat anything, though I sometimes go to the kitchen and cook it myself, just to try and coax him. O, Mrs. Nicoll, I'm growing real anxious about my poor father."

The tears, which had been repressed while she was speaking, began to flow freely when she stopped. Her friend came and sat down beside her, and, after a minute's soothing caress, she brought the conversation back to practical issues. "Of course, Mary," she said, "with nobody but your father, it's impossible for you to leave home and take a situation as I did. But I've been trying to think if there's

nothing you could take in hand that wouldn't take you away from your father."

"I'm almost afraid to speak of it in case you may think me too bold. But I sometimes think I could do office work as well as many young men. When my father was winding up his business, I helped him a good deal with his accounts, and wrote a great many letters for him. I haven't the courage to suggest it myself to Mr. Nicoll; but I wonder if you would object to ask him, whether there's no kind of work about his office that he thinks I might be fit for."

Mrs. Nicoll was silent for a few seconds, and then replied, "Well, dear, I don't know exactly what to say, as I never thought of this before. But I'll have a talk with Mr. Nicoll to-night, and I'll [illegible] u know what he thinks of it to-morrow."

Soon after this Miss Boyd left. In the evening, Mrs. Nicoll mentioned to her husband the subject of her conversation with Miss Boyd. He listened for some time in silence, apparently perplexed, as his wife had been, by the difficulty of forming an opinion on a question to which he had given no thought before. At last, as if some idea had suddenly flashed on him, he said abruptly, "By the

by. Annie, have you any of Mary's letters at hand? I'd like to see her handwriting."

Mrs. Nicoll went and rummaged through her writing-desk. In a few seconds she picked out a letter, and handed it to her husband.

"That's good," he exclaimed, after a momentary glance at the letter. "I was afraid she might have one of these illegible zig-zag scrawls that seem to be the ideal of feminine penmanship just now. That would simply never do for business correspondence. But I'm glad to see her writing. It's not exactly masculine, but it's a fair round hand—and perfectly legible, which is the main thing after all. I believe it would pass muster."

"O James!" exclaimed Mrs. Nicoll in turn, elated by the unexpectedly favourable reception of her proposal. "Do you really think you could get something of this sort for poor Mary? It would make me so happy."

"Well, Annie, you know I've long thought it pretty hard for girls like Mary that they are kept out of remunerative occupations, not because they're unfit, but because they're not boys. Still the prejudice is there, and we have to face it."

"You could face it better in a small place like Arderholm than in a big city."

"Yes! you're right, Annie; I think we could. At any rate, I'd be willing to try. But I'm not quite sure how Willie would feel about it. He and I have been talking of getting a confidential clerk to help us with the correspondence. We've been doing all the confidential correspondence ourselves. But it's just getting rather difficult to keep up with it, and it's clear we'll need some help when we begin our new scheme. But--well, there might be a little awkwardness in the situation. Just think of it now—a handsome young fellow like Willie with a bonnie lass like Mary for a confidential clerk. I confess that even to my unromantic mind ——"

"Stop now, Jamie," said the wife, though laughing heartily herself. "You're getting into one of your funny moods."

"No, truly, Annie. It's the situation itself that's funny, rather than my mood. And yet I don't think the situation would be so serious as might be imagined. For Willie seems a very cool customer. You would be astonished at the tone of indifference in which he spoke about Mary."

"Oh! but," Mrs. Nicoll interjected, "I don't believe he has ever seen her since they were children together at school."

"Maybe," replied her husband. "But I rather

think he takes after his father in these matters. I remember once his father told me he had never felt the slightest interest in any girl till he met Mrs. Forbes. He attributed it to the peculiar circumstances of his youth. He had never enjoyed the society of girls, among whom he was likely to look for a wife. But I suspect there was something peculiar in his emotional temperament; and that, of course, may be inherited by his son. However, if we can't manage to get this situation for Mary, something else may be found. And, meanwhile, don't you think she could plead her cause better than anybody else?"

"I daresay," was the cautious reply.

"I don't mean that she should personally call on my partner. That would perhaps be asking too much of the poor girl. But Willie is ready to do anything for his mother; and if we can get her interested, the matter may be regarded as settled. Now, don't you think Mary herself would have as much i ience on Mrs. Forbes as anybody?"

"Jamie, you're a kind-hearted fellow, so considerate to the poor girl. I couldn't have suggested a better plan."

"Well, Annie, I'll leave you to arrange her meeting Mrs. Forbes."

At this point, the conversation was interrupted by the announcement of a visitor who wished to see Mr. Nicoll. The visitor was a Mr. Craig, who had succeeded to Mr. Boyd's business; and the subject, on which he had called to consult Mr. Nicoll, was, as will appear presently, not without interest to Mr. Boyd and his daughter.

Next day, Miss Boyd returned to learn from Mrs. Nicoll the result of the preceding evening's conversation. The necessary explanations were given, and were received with the eager joy of a hope that seemed to be nearing fulfilment. When Mrs. Nicoll proposed to call on Mrs. Forbes at once, Mary expressed a keen delight at the prospect. "I've often wished," she said, "to know Mrs. Forbes. Since I was a child I've been accustomed to look up to her as a sort of ideal lady. But she's always seemed to me such a grand lady, that I'd be afraid to call by myself."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Nicoll, with an amused smile, "you'll find more homely kindness than grandeur in her. She's one of the best of women. But, of course, I'm going with you to-day, and we may start at once, if you're ready."

Accordingly they set out, and a few minutes brought them to Burnside. Mrs. Forbes was in the

parlour when they entered, and received them with a peculiarly hearty welcome, when she saw Mrs. Nicoll's companion.

"I've taken the liberty," said Mrs. Nicoll, "of bringing Miss Boyd with me to-day. She tells me she has often wished to know you."

"Eh!" replied Mrs. Forbes, "it was real good of you, Annie, to bring her, and"—this was addressed to Mary—"it was real good of you, dear, to come and cheer a lonely old woman."

And, as she held Mary's hand lovingly in both of hers, she added, "Mrs. Nicoll has spoken of you so often and so kindly, that I've long wished to meet you. But, Annie," she said, turning to Mrs. Nicoll, "you didn't tell me half the truth;" and while she gazed with affectionate admiration at Mary, whose hand still lay in hers, she exclaimed, "What a bonny face!" Then, drawing her close to her breast, she hid her blushes by a warm motherly kiss, perhaps for the moment filling up by the imaginative creation of affection a void in the heart of a mother who knew the joy of sons, but not of a daughter. She then led Mary to a sofa, on which she sat down beside her.

Mrs. Nicoll, who took a chair opposite them,

said, "But, Mrs. Forbes, you seemed ready for going out."

"Yes," was the reply, "I'm waiting for the carriage to come round."

"Then, don't let us keep you," added Mrs. Nicoll.

"But you're not keeping me till the carriage comes. And I'll tell you what I've been thinking. If Miss Boyd's not better engaged——"

"Oh! I've nothing to do," said Mary, committing herself, before she knew to what.

"Well, then," Mrs. Forbes went on, "you'll just come with me. It'll be a blessing to me to give me your company, and we'll have a good opportunity of getting acquainted."

"Oh! you're too kind," exclaimed Mary.

"But now," Mrs. Forbes continued, "I think you had better both come back to tea here."

"But, Mrs. Forbes, my father——"

"Oh! of course, we'll call at your father's on our way, and I'll send a message over to the mill to tell Mr. Nicoll to come with Willie."

Mary was thus drawn into the arrangement, not unwillingly, but with a certain pleasure in the prospect. But further conversation was prevented by the sound of the carriage wheels. Mrs. Forbes begged to be excused for a moment while she went

to give an explanation to Kirstie. As soon as she was out of the room, Mrs. Nicoll came over to Mary, and, putting her arm round her, whispered "I could almost say that a Providence has been guiding us. Everything has turned out so much better than we could have arranged it ourselves. I never saw Mrs. Forbes so much taken up with anybody. You've fairly bewitched her. You've got the whole afternoon now to tell your story. I know very well how you can do that in your own natural way, and we can leave the rest to Mrs. Forbes."

The whisper was scarcely over when Mrs. Forbes returned. "By the bye," she exclaimed, turning to Mrs. Nicoll, "I've been leaving you out of account altogether. I'm afraid you must think I'm so much taken up with my new friend, that I'm forgetting my old."

"Indeed, I feel just a little bit jealous."

"And well you may. For it's just an extraordinary pleasure to have such a companion. But, without joking, Annie, will you not come with us?"

"Oh! no," replied Mrs. Nicoll, laughing, "three don't make a company. But truly," she added in a more serious tone, "I have some things to look after at home this afternoon."

"Well, don't forget the evening."

"Oh! I'll be back in good time."

This conversation took place as the three ladies were making their way to the door. When they got outside, and Mrs. Forbes felt the coolness of the air, she put her hand on Mary's shoulder to feel the texture of her dress. "My dear," she said, "you'll need something warmer over you." Then, turning to the old servant who had followed the ladies to the door, she added, "You'd better get something for Miss Boyd, Kirstie."

"Oh! I didna forget the young leddy, mem. Here's that grand warm shawl was sent you in a present frae Paisley the Nairday afore last. Miss Boyd wad set it aff rale fine. But maybe she wad like this cloak better. The young leddies noo-a-days think a shawl mak's them look auld. My certes, when I was a lassie, auld and young, gentle and simple, [illegible]cht there wasna a brawer buskin' for ony woman nor a guid Paisley shawl. 'Deed, nae woman was thocht to be dressed ava withoot ane. But fashions is a' changed since than."

Whether to please the old servant, or under the guidance of her own taste, Mary decided in favour of the shawl.

"Eh! Miss Boyd," exclaimed the old woman in delight. "I was sure you were aboon thae new-

fangled fashions. Just let me fling the shawl ower your shouthers afore you step intae the cairrage. Folks dinna ken noo-a-days hoo a shawl should be put on."

As she retained the skill developed during the reign of the older fashion, Kirstie threw the shawl over Mary's shoulders in a way that made it hang in very graceful drapery. "There noo!" she exclaimed, as she stood back to admire the artistic effect. "Losh me, the weaver that made that shawl wad be a prood man the day, if he saw his wab shown aff on sic a bonny figure."

"Thank you very much," said Mary with a quiet smile, coming down to a lower level of sentiment. "It's very comfortable indeed. I'm sure there 'll be no danger of catching cold now."

As the carriage drove off, Mrs. Nicoll said to Kirstie, "I think I must bring over one of my mother's beautiful old shawls to get you to throw it over me in the proper style."

"Weel, Mrs. Nicoll," replied the old woman with rather blunt frankness, "I'll no just say ye hae siccan a bonnie young face as Miss Boyd, but there's no a finer figure in braid Scotland for settin' aff a shawl."

"Oh! well, we'll try it one of these fine days.

But I must go. So good-bye just now, Kirstie. I believe we're all coming back to tea."

"Sae the mistress tell't me. Ye're aye welcome in this hoose, Mrs. Nicoll. And I'm just gaun tae send Janet ower tae the office tae tell Mr. Nicoll. But maybe it'll be better for me tae gang mysel'. For Janet's sic a gomeril, if she fa's in wi' that laddie Mike Sullivan, there's nae sayin' whan she'll be back."

As Mrs. Nicoll had anticipated, no plan could have been devised more advantageous for Mary than that which had arranged itself by the natural turn of the afternoon's events. The conditions were, in fact, more favourable than Mrs. Nicoll had supposed. Mary had been put thoroughly at her ease by a welcome from Mrs. Forbes which far exceeded her expectations. The luxurious roll of the carriage, as it bore her through the bracing air from the sea, filled her with a healthy physical pleasure that dissipated the gloom from her life, and made the whole world bright for the moment. She brought also an interval of delight to her father, and of relief to herself from her anxious forebodings about his health. When the carriage stopped at their pretty villa, she got out and came upon him quite unexpectedly as he was seated at the parlour fireside. Mr. Boyd had

had the benefit of an excellent education in his youth before he went into business, and he retained through life the tastes which his education had developed. The instincts, therefore, of an educated gentleman had in him never been swamped by the manners of the shopkeeper. Roused by his daughter's sudden entrance, and gazing at her beautiful face and figure with fatherly joy and pride, he exclaimed, "Why, Mary, how well you look with your rosy cheeks! And what a beautiful shawl! Where have you been?"

"Mrs. Forbes has been very kind to me; I can't tell you how kind. She's taking me for a drive."

"But where is she?"

"In the carriage at the gate."

"But will she not come in?"

"She spoke of it, but I thought it better not to trouble her to get out of the carriage."

"Then," he said, to his daughter's astonishment and delight, "I must go out to see her and thank her."

And out he went into the hall, put on his hat, and in a few seconds was standing by the carriage with evident pleasure in his face, shaking hands with Mrs. Forbes.

"It's too bad to disturb you in this way, Mr. Boyd."

"I came to thank you for your kindness to my poor lassie. She's evidently enjoying her drive."

"I rather think, Mr. Boyd, the obligation's on my side. I'm very much indebted to her, and to you too, for letting me enjoy her company."

"Father," said Mary, "you don't know all Mrs. Forbes' kindness. She wants me to go back with her to Burnside for tea; and we've come to ask if you'll let me. Will you, father?"

"Why, surely, my dear. Why shouldn't you enjoy yourself while you may?"

"Then you don't object to be left alone till I come back?"

"But," interposed Mrs. Forbes, "I didn't mean that your father should be left alone. That would spoil our pleasure. You must join us, Mr. Boyd; we just want you to make our little party complete."

A momentary tremor passed over Mary at a proposal which clashed so violently against her father's growing disposition to shrink from encountering his old friends. But the tremor gave way to an exultant feeling of delight, as she saw his face beaming with some of its old pleasure.

"You'll come, then, father," she pleaded, clinging

to him with childlike fondness, while she looked up to his face with irresistibly beseeching eyes.

"You little witch," he said, as he drew her to him, "I see you know how to wheedle your old father still." Then, turning to Mrs. Forbes, he added, "It would be very ungrateful in me, Mrs. Forbes, not to accept your kindness. I've not been going out much since my misfortune, but——"

As he seemed to hesitate, Mrs. Forbes broke in, "It may help to cheer you up a little, Mr. Boyd."

"I have no doubt it will," he replied; and then, turning to his daughter, he added, "but, Mary, we mustn't keep Mrs. Forbes waiting."

As Mary stepped into the carriage, Mrs. Forbes said, "Then, Mr. Boyd, we'll call for you in about an hour. Good-bye just now."

As the carriage drove off, he raised his hat to Mrs. Forbes, while his daughter threw him a kiss with girlish glee. Not since the disaster to the bank had she felt a moment of such exhilaration, and she lay back for a few minutes in silent enjoyment of the luxury. At last Mrs. Forbes broke the silence by remarking, "Your father has such a fine manner. No wonder he was a general favourite in Arderholm, and so successful in business." Then she went on, after a moment's pause, "But he seemed thinner than he

used to be. He was always so healthy-looking before. I'm afraid this terrible affair of the bank has been preying on his mind."

Thus, without any artifice or effort, Mary was led to tell her story. Its intrinsic pathos was enough to excite the sympathy of any motherly heart, while the invigorating exhilaration of the moment cleared her language from all colouring of a weak sensibility, and tended to give the sympathy of her auditor a practical turn by the cheery courage with which she faced the outlook into some industrial occupation for the maintenance of her father and herself. At last she referred to the conversation she had had with Mrs. Nicoll. This seemed to throw an unexpected light on the problem for Mrs. Forbes, and she listened with more eager attention.

"I'm glad you thought of this," she said at last. "I'm afraid I don't know enough about the work of the mill to be able to tell what can be done in the way you mention. But we'll just have to try and find something that's suitable for you. At any rate, I'll speak to my son about it to-night. So I think you may leave it in my hands for the present."

"O, Mrs. Forbes, I don't know how I can ever thank you enough for your kindness."

"My dear, you make too much of a very small

thing. It's surely no great trouble to me to speak to my son about a good turn that anybody might be glad to do for another, especially forp eople like your father and yourself. At any rate, you mustn't be discouraged. You have many kind friends who are ready to do anything they can for you."

"I haven't been so much cheered since our misfortune happened, and my poor father seemed almost his old self again this afternoon."

"I'm real glad, then, that he's comng with us. Perhaps it will help to make him *quite* his old self."

By this time they were nearing Inverarder again, and by the time they had reached Mr. Boyd's villa they found that he had been on the look-out for them, and was at the gate when the carriage drew up, to save them the trouble of getting out. When they left him an hour before, he had not returned to his solitary seat, and had thus avoided the risk of a relapse into the morbid gloom which had been preying on his spirit so long. Feeling the necessity of being ready when the carriage returned, he had gone at once to dress; and as this involved a considerable change of clothing, and an amount of personal embellishment, in which he had not indulged for some time, it had furnished him with sufficient occupation to keep his thoughts from reverting to the subject

of his misfortune. Not having his daughter beside him to give hints, he had been tenderly thoughtful to select a costume which might be particularly gratifying to her. He had therefore turned out a handsome velvet coat, of which she had made him a present on his last birthday. To give her a further gratification, he had added a white vest; and when he had finished, he said to himself that he thought he had rigged himself in a style that would be sure to give her pleasure. As he had his overcoat on when he came out to the carriage, Mary did not see how he was dressed. When they reached Burnside, however, of course he pulled off his overcoat in the hall before he followed Mrs. Forbes into the parlour. Delighted with what she then saw, his daughter slipped her arm through his; and as she pressed his velvet sleeve, she looked up to his face with an expression in her eyes that said more plainly than words, "How good, you dear old father, to put on that!" And his look in return said as plainly, "I'm glad it pleases you; I did it for that!"

"Now, Mr. Boyd," said Mrs. Forbes, as she turned to her guests, "you'll have to excuse Mary and me for a little till we get ready for tea. Mr. Nicoll and my son will be here in a few minutes, and I daresay

you may find something to amuse you in the magazines on the table till they come."

"I'll have no difficulty about that," replied Mr. Boyd. "Please don't trouble yourselves about me."

They then left him to himself. But he was soon relieved from his loneliness by the two other gentlemen entering the parlour.

"Hillo!" called out Mr. Nicoll, as he advanced and shook Mr. Boyd very heartily by the hand; "this is an unexpected pleasure."

"It *is* an agreeable surprise," Forbes chimed in. "It's a long time since I had the pleasure of seeing you, Mr. Boyd."

"Well, I confess, gentlemen, this bad business of the bank rather crushed the spirit out o' me. I've been almost ashamed to look my old friends in the face, as if everybody was pointing the finger at me for my folly in bringing ruin on my poor daughter as well as myself."

"Nonsense!" Mr. Nicoll again blurted out in his hearty way. "You're not to blame, surely. Business life at the best has its risks and losses. The shrewdest men can't escape these altogether. But, bless me! who could suspect that the directors of a bank, who were posing before the world as benevolent and religious gentlemen, could be cooking

their accounts for years to hoodwink the shareholders they were plundering?"

"No, no, Mr. Boyd," Forbes added, "I've heard many speak of your misfortune; but no one has anything but the kindest sympathy for you, though they have generally pretty strong language for the men by whom you have been defrauded."

"I'm really obliged to you, gentlemen, for your kindness. Perhaps, I have allowed the subject to prey on me too much. I can scarcely tell you how I feel relieved by your cheering language."

At this point, Mr. Boyd was relieved still more by the entrance of the ladies. Mrs. Forbes came first, leading Mary by the hand.

"Willie," she said, as she turned to her son, "here's a young lady thinks she'll need an introduction. It's so long since she met you, she's afraid you can't remember her now."

"Miss Boyd, I presume," was Willie's rejoinder, while he held out his hand frankly as to an old acquaintance. "If I hadn't seen her father here, it's a little doubtful if I could have recognise her. I fancy we are both a good deal changed since we last met."

With this, the ceremony of re-introducing the two school companions of earlier days was brought to a

close by Mrs. Forbes turning to Mr. Boyd and saying, "Tea's ready, Mr. Boyd. I'll take your arm if you'll be kind enough to go with me to the dining-room."

"I feel honoured, Mrs. Forbes," replied the guest.

"Now, Willie," said Mrs. Nicoll, "this is rather an awkward arrangement; but it can't be helped. You'll have to leave the young lady to my good-man, and be content with me."

"You'd be very jealous of that arrangement if you had heard him speak of Miss Boyd as I have."

"Oh! I know all about that. But what would be the use of my being jealous with such a rival?"

Notwithstanding this division of the party, it scarcely separated them for a moment. Their number was so conveniently small, that the conversation at table continued general all the time. When they rose from the table and returned to the parlour, they grouped themselves in a circle round the fire; and the conversation still clung, for the most part, to topics of common interest. Now and then, however, two paired off for a few minutes into some separate subject; and it was on one of these occasions that Mrs. Forbes contrived to say in a low voice to Mrs. Nicoll, "I said to you this afternoon that you hadn't told me half the truth about Miss Boyd. I was

speaking then about her external appearance. But I can say the same now about her spirit and character. I'm sure I never met a more intelligent, refined, sensible girl. Told me about her conversation with you. Isn't she real brave in such a bonny young creature? I'll speak to Willie about it to-night, and you must do your best with Mr. Nicoll."

Beyond this remark, no reference was made to the subject. In accordance with social custom in Arderholm, the party broke up early, Mrs. Forbes sending Mary and her father home in the same carriage which had brought them to Burnside.

When the hostess and her son were left once more alone, he said, "That was a very agreeable party you made for us, mother, after our day's work. I found Mr. Boyd an exceedingly well-read and intelligent man."

"So he is; but what did you think of Miss Boyd?"

"She seems a nice girl."

"Oh! you're a sly young rogue, Willie. I believe you're trying to hoodwink your old mother by pretending to be so cool."

"Why, mother, I'm afraid you've caught the infection from Mr. and Mrs. Nicoll. They seem perfecty infatuated about Miss Boyd."

"Maybe you'll be worse than any of us before long. I'll no be surprised to see you broken-hearted one of these days when you ask her to marry you, and find she won't have you."

I'm afraid, mother, I'm none o' the marrying sort. At any rate, this new scheme of ours is going to take up so much time and thought, that I'll have to leave marriage alone for the present."

"Indeed, Willie, nothing would help you better in your work than a sensible young wife."

"But I have no time for courting just now." And he trilled out in somewhat imperfect tune,

"Favour wi' wooing is fashious to seek."

"Now, Willie, without joking," said his mother, in a more serious tone, "I want to speak about Miss Boyd and her father. You know how they're placed with this bank failure."

"Yes, mother, I was thinking about it several times to-night, and wondering if nothing could be done for them."

"Well, Willie, you may get a chance o' doing something for them soon. You'd be astonished if you knew the courage of that young lady. She's on the look-out for some work to support her father and herself. And with all her beauty and refine-

ment, she hasn't a bit o' foolish pride. She's willing to turn her hand to any honest work, and she was asking me this afternoon if there was nothing about the mill that she could do for a living."

"Why, I can't conceive of any situation that we could ask a young lady like her to take."

"But about your office? She says that she helped her father a great deal with his accounts and his letters when he was winding up his business. I'm sure there's many a well-educated girl could help business men wi' their books and their letters a great deal better than some o' the raw laddies they take into their offices."

"You're right there, mother. Don't imagine that I make any objection to a young lady getting employment at any occupation she's fit for. Only this question's so new that I can't see just at once what might be done in the matter. I don't know what Mr. Nicoll may say ——."

"Mrs. Nicoll's preparing him for the question."

"All right then, mother. I'll have a talk with him on the subject to-morrow. And," he added with a smile, "if you're afraid I'll be too cool, you may be sure he'll be enthusiastic."

"Well, then, you two must just put your heads together, and *make* a place for the young lady."

CHAPTER XX.

Sandie Craig.

> "An honest man he is, and hates the slime
> That sticks on filthy deeds."
>
> —*Shakespere*, "*Othello.*"

The following morning, when Forbes entered the office, he found Mr. Alexander Craig waiting for him.

"Mr. Craig," said Nicoll, "wants to see you on some private business."

"Come this way, Mr. Craig," said Forbes, and led the way into the manager's private room.

Mr. Craig had not enjoyed the education of his predecessor in business, and retained a strong native accent and dialect in his talk. He had developed, however, a great deal of commercial ability, which enabled him ultimately to acquire the business that had been built up in Arderholm by Mr. Boyd. Possessing also a large fund of natural good humour,

he bore on his fresh, round face a perpetual smile; and his manners were characterised by an unfailing complaisance, as if he were always seeking to accommodate a customer. Even the gloom of the story he had to tell Mr. Forbes seemed but a light passing cloud that could scarcely darken even for a moment the habitual serenity of his expression and bearing.

As soon as the door was closed, Forbes said, pointing to a chair, "Take a seat, Mr. Craig," while he sat down himself on a chair beside the desk in the room.

"I hope I'm no troubling ye, Mr. Forbes," said Mr. Craig.

"Not at all," was the reply. "Can I do anything for you?"

"That's just what I've come to ask. I've had a long talk on the subject wi' Mr. Nicoll. He's been rale kind listenin' to my story, and has putten himsel' tae a heap o' trouble for me. But, of coorse, he was canny in expressin' an opeenion, and tellt me I wad hae to see you." After a moment's pause he went on, "This is hoo it comes aboot, Mr. Forbes. You see I was tempted, like some better men, tae pit some money in this confoonded bank—that I should use sic a word! Of coorse, ye ken that I've

not only lost a' the money I gied them, but I'm liable for every penny I've got in the worl' besides."

"So I understand," said Forbes. "But have you not been able to come to some arrangement with the liquidators. Mr. Bo[illegible] I'm told, has got a discharge."

"I was just coming to that," Mr. Forbes. "I've got a dischairge tae. Ye see I had naething, forbye the money that's lost in the bank, except the stock in the shop. It's a guid stock, for I had laid in the winter supplies. But it just so happens that the notes I had gien are nearly a' discoonted in the unfortunate bank. So they see there's no muckle chance o' my notes being met when they're due if they tak' my stock frae me, and turn me oot on the street. The fack is, some o' the wholesale men I deal wi' are ruined themsels by the bank, and they're a' trim'ling wi' fear the noo, and they dinna ken hoo long they can staun; for every mail's bringin' news o' failures among their retail customers. So the liquidators—they had just tae mak' the best o' a bad bargain. And I maun alloo they were real daicent gentlemen, wanting tae dae only what was fair. So they've let me keep my stock. They even offered an extension o' twa-three months, as they said the times were hard; but I tellt them I had a

guid-gaun business, and I thocht I could pay its debts like an honest man, if they wadna tak' every penny frae me as fast as I could mak' it."

"Well, it seems to me that you've made as favourable an arrangement as could be expected in the circumstances."

"'Deed, ye're richt there, Mr. Forbes. It's better nor I expeckit. I'm gae weel pleased to get aff sae easy. But the angersome bit o' my story's tae come yet. Ye see, the loss o' my shares in the bank's no a loss tae me only; it's a loss tae Mr. Boyd as weel."

"How's that?"

"It's this way, Mr. Forbes. Of coorse, I couldna buy Mr. Boyd oot a' at ance. He gied me gey easy terms, and I was tae pey the last instalment—a thoosan' pounds—on Mairtimas coming. Weel, I had been layin' by a guid lang while—amaist ever since I cam' intae Mr. Boyd's shop—or I could never hae thocht o' buying sic a fine business. Aweel, some years sin', Mr. Boyd says to me, 'I suppose, Sandie, ye hae your savings just lying on deposit in the bank;' and than he goes on to show hoo little interest I was gettin' for 't, and hoo muckle mair I could mak' if I was to buy some shares. So we had a talk aboot it; but, tae mak' a lang story short, the upshot was I bocht a wheen o' shares that his

broker was offerin' at the time. I needna say, I was gey weel pleased wi' my bargain. The bank's been paying grand dividends; and if a' had gane richt, I wad hae sellt my shares at Mairtimas for ten pound a share mair nor I paid for them. In fack, no lang afore the failure, Mr. Boyd says to me, 'Sandie, if ye hae tae sell ony o' your bank-stock tae pey me at Mairtimas, ye needna put yoursel' tae ony bother or expense. Ye'll save the broker's commission if ye just pass the shares ower tae me. I'll tak' them aff your haun at the market price.' Mr. Boyd was aye awfu' ta'en up wi' that bank. Ye see noo, Mr. Forbes, hoo I'm placed. I had that money laid by, a' safe and soon, as I thocht, tae pey Mr. Boyd on Mairtimas, and noo it's a' melted awa' like snaw aff a dike, as the saying is."

"That's most unfortunate for Mr. Boyd as well as for you."

"O, Mr. Forbes, if ye kent hoo kind Mr. Boyd has been tae me since he took me into his shop, a wee bit laddie, fit for naething but rinnin' errands, hoo he's paid me guid wages and gien me mony a present forbye, hoo he learnt me the business week in and week oot for the feck o' thirty year, and than helpit me at last tae tak' it aff his haums a'thegither. Man! I could bite my fingers aff, as the saying is,

tae think I've brocht ruin on the man I wad hae dune mair tae obleege nor onybody else in the worl'."

"Still, Mr. Craig, you were scarcely to blame in the circumstances."

"That's what Mr. Boyd says, but that's what mortifies me maist of a'. He's been that kind aboot it, takin' a' the blame tae himsel'. 'It was my faut, Sandie,' he says; 'it was me brocht ye into this scrape.' Hoosomever, that doesna mend maitters, Mr. Forbes. It's gey hard for a man at his time o' life. 'Sandie,' he says tae me, 'you and me's in the same boat; and it's swampit in gey deep watter. You're a young man, and maybe ye'll get your heid aboon watter again; but I'm feared there's naething for me but tae be drooned.' Hoosomever, I says tae him, just tae cheer him up like, 'I'm no that fond o' droonin', Mr. Boyd. I think I'll can warstle tae the shore some way or ither; and if a strong airm can dae't, by George I'll pu' you oot tae.'"

"I'm glad to see you don't give up heart."

"Na, na! A stoot heart tae a stey brae, as the sayin' is; and I'll be geyan sair forfochten afore I gie in till I win tae the tap o' the brae again."

"Well, I hope you will, and have no doubt you will with your courage. But have you any plan?"

"Bless me! I've been beatin' aboot the bush, as

the sayin' is, a' this time, and never come tae the pint yet. Hoosomever, you'll unnerstaun' better noo what I was ettlin' tae say. I've had a long talk wi' Mr. Nicoll, and I think he'll be expectin' you tae ask him aboot it, as he's put himsel' tae a lot o' trouble to mak' everything sure. I was thinkin' I micht maybe get a loan tae help me through the stress o' this wather. I'm no needin' actual cash, except tae pay Mr. Boyd; but I could face the rest o' the struggle wi' a licht heart if I kent that he was paid, for it would aye be a bit help tae him tae keep the wolf frae the door, as the sayin' is. It would be like tryin' tae soom wi' a millstane roon my neck, if I saw him stervin' for want o' the money that I was awin' him. I wadna need muckle help forbye that, except that, when my stock needs plenishin' again, maybe some o' the wholesale men may mak' trouble aboot takin' my note, as they've seen my name on the list o' shareholders. I've been a pretty good customer to them, though I say't mysel'; and I think maist o' them 'll be glad tae tak' my orders the same as if naething had happened. But I would like tae be allooed tae refer them tae you, if they mak' ony trouble. A guid word frae you and Mr. Nicoll, I'm geyan sure, 'll satisfy onybody. I dinna think I'll need mair nor that. I've never, a' my life, asked

onybody tae pit their name tae notes o' mine; and if I canna cairry on my business withoot that, I'll raither gie't up a'thegither."

"Well, Mr. Craig, your proposal seems not at all unreasonable, and I'm pleased you should have had so much confidence in us. But, of course, I should like to see Mr. Nicoll, and hear what he has to say."

Accordingly Mr. Forbes went to the door, and asked Mr. Nicoll to come in. The details, brought out by Mr. Nicoll, need not be repeated here. He explained that two evenings before, he had a long conversation with Mr. Craig, in which he had elicited the necessary information about his business. To satisfy himself, however, he had asked Mr. Lorimer, head of Forbes & Company's counting-house, to make an examination of Mr. Craig's books. Mr. Lorimer was called in, and explained at some length that he had spent three or four hours the previous evening at Mr. Craig's shop, and found the books admirably kept, so that he was able to form a clear idea of the state of the business since it came into Mr. Craig's hands. He found, too, that the business had been very prosperous, and had no doubt that it could be carried on by Mr. Craig with the same success as before, if he were not handicapped by the

knowledge that he was involved in the disaster to the bank.

After putting a few questions to bring out one or two points more clearly, Forbes turned to Nicoll and said, "I'd like to have a minute's talk with you about this before saying anything further."

"I could call back again any time that would suit you, gentlemen," said Mr. Craig.

"No, no; that isn't necessary," replied Forbes. "If you just wait in the office, Mr. Nicoll and I can settle this in two or three minutes."

Accordingly, Mr. Lorimer returned to the counting-house, and Mr. Craig went into the outer room of the office.

As soon as the two partners were alone, Forbes began, "I'm very much obliged to you, Nicoll, for taking so much trouble in this matter. You've made it comparatively simple for me. I fancy, from your putting yourself to such trouble, that you're inclined to consider Mr. Craig's request on the whole favourably."

"Well, yes, I am. The investment is not, of course, a first-class security in the ordinary meaning of that phrase. But it's a first-rate security all the same."

"I think so, too. Mr. Lorimer's report shows there's very little risk."

"Not a tithe of the risk there is in many of the speculations that business men go into every day of their lives. Of course, the only real security is Mr. Craig himself. Well, you've had a pretty good chance of seeing what he is this morning. He's not a man that can conceal himself. There's a straightforward naturalness about him that lays bare almost every nook and cranny of his character."

"Yes, I was going to call it amusing. But there's something so good in its perfect honesty, that some kindlier word—say charm, rather than amusement—would convey the impression."

"You're right. He's not an educated man, but he has the good sense and (I might add) the downright honesty not to make himself ridiculous by aping the manners and language of culture. Then you can see that under all his untutored exterior there's a substratum of solid worth, both intellectual and moral. As far as business intelligence is concerned, you'll not easily find his match every day; and then his integrity is incorruptible."

"I've been struck," Forbes chimed in, "with his anxiety about this debt to Mr. Boyd. I fancy many

a man in his position would have tried to get rid of his liability by going into bankruptcy."

"I daresay," rejoined Nicoll, "he might perhaps have got out of his trouble in that way. But the idea would simply never occur to him of trying to evade a financial obligation by any sort of trickery, however legal."

"That's the impression he has made on me too," said Forbes.

"It's the character he gets from everybody; and that, of course, is some satisfaction for us; it strengthens our opinion. You may not know," added Nicoll, smiling, "that he's a married man."

"I daresay," replied Forbes, also with a smile; "that's a point a bachelor's apt to overlook."

"Nevertheless," continued Nicoll, "it's worth while keeping in mind, that marriage generally steadies a man, and that's in Mr. Craig's favour. Then he has no children, and that's one source of expense cut off. Besides, Mrs. Nicoll tells me his wife is a sensible, homely body like himself; and she'll never lead him into extravagant habits; she'll rather help him to economise. It seems that since this trouble came on them she has dispensed with a servant, and has been doing the housework herself."

After a moment's pause, Forbes suggested, "I

suppose it's scarcely necessary to say anything about his health. A man that seems so little affected physically by all the worry he has gone through about this bank, should stand a good deal."

"Oh! he's all right in that respect. He told me he's just over forty, and I fancy he has twenty or thirty years of work in him yet."

"Well, then," said Forbes, "there's another aspect in which this thing appears to me. Of course we have to do something to relieve the distress brought about by the failure of this bank. The relief committee, I see, propose to raise a fund by subscription, and I presume we'll have to subscribe like others. But meanwhile we have a good opportunity of giving very effective help at our own doors. We can not only save Mr. Craig from the possible ruin of his business, but we can at the same time save Mr. Boyd from destitution."

"I wasn't thinking of it in that light, but I'm glad you suggested it. I don't know that we're likely to have as much satisfaction from any other help we can render to the sufferers."

Nicoll was in the act of rising, when he was interrupted by Forbes adding abruptly, "I think this may save us from the necessity of taking up the

question, that Miss Boyd (I understand) has been speaking to your wife and my mother about."

"At least we can leave it alone till we see what Miss Boyd herself may say after she hears of this. Of course it's not a large sum for people that have been living so comfortably. But she may prefer to accept the situation. And if they were up here in a small house, or perhaps (for a while at least) in a furnished lodging, she could make a small income go a long way."

"Then," said Forbes, "we're to consider the matter settled. I'll leave you to explain it to Mr. Craig."

Nicoll went accordingly to the door, and asked Mr. Craig to come in and take a seat. The poor man, as he entered, betrayed a certain tremor of shyness as he glanced from one to the other of the two gentlemen on whom his financial fate depended. But the tremor vanished when Mr. Nicoll began to explain the decision, and his heart was flooded to overflowing with a great wave of jubilant gratitude as the explanation went on. Instead of looking up, as he usually did, with his bright honest eyes, he kept them fixed on the floor, evidently to hide his feelings.

When Nicoll finished, and there was a pause

as if Mr. Craig were unable to speak, Forbes sought to relieve him by saying, "I haven't had so much satisfaction in anything I've done for a long time, Mr. Craig. I think both Mr. Nicoll and I wish you to look on this as an expression of confidence in yourself."

At this Mr. Craig made an effort to reply, while he drew the back of his hand across his eyes, which still remained fixed on the ground; but his words were choked at times, and he had to make the pretence of clearing his throat by a very artificial cough. "Gentlemen," he said, "I hae nae language but plain Scotch, and I'm geyan blunt even at that; but gin my life be spared, I'm sure you'll ne'er rue the day ye've putten your trust in a plain, honest Scot."

"There's no fear o' that, Mr. Craig," said Nicoll in a tone of hearty cheer. "I thoroughly agree with what Mr. Forbes has said about our confidence in you. But at the same time you're not to feel that this is in any sense a mere charity. Of course, if we didn't trust you we'd never have entertained your proposal for a moment. But it's a sound business transaction. We're putting so much money into your business, and we think it a safe investment."

"Thank you, Mr. Nicoll, very kindly," replied Mr. Craig, while he rose to go. But he moved with hesitating step, as if he had something still to urge; and at last he said, "I was thinkin' it would be a real gude turn tae Mr. Boyd tae let him ken aboot this as sune's I can. Noo, the van's gaun doon tae Inverarder this efternune, and I'm ettlin' tae gang doon wi't myself; and if I had just a bit note tae show tae Mr. Boyd, it would be a great obligation. For I'm feared, when I tell him, he'll maybe think it's ower gude news tae be true; but gin I had it in black and white, as the saying is, he buit tae believe't."

Mr. Nicoll acknowledged the force of the remark, and sat down to write a note such as should serve the purpose. Mr. Craig took the note with thanks; and as he turned to go, he said with gleaming eyes, "I ne'er gaed a happier errand in a' my born days."

CHAPTER XXI.

The Bearer of Good News.

"All's well that ends well."

On leaving the office of Forbes & Co., Mr. Craig hurried to his shop, and, after a few inquiries and instructions, went upstairs to his early dinner. The meal was despatched with unusual haste, while his van stood waiting in front of the shop. In a few minutes he came downstairs again, still wiping his mouth with his handkerchief, as he swallowed the last morsel of his dinner. He scarcely stopped to answer a question addressed to him by one of his young men, but rushed out to the van, and sprang on to the seat beside the driver with an almost boyish alacrity, while he called out, "Drive on, Tam."

They had not gone more than two or three hundred yards, when Mr. Craig called out impatiently again, "Man, Tam, what's the matter wi' your mear? Ye've surely been workin' her ower hard this mornin'."

"No, Mr. Craig; we had just tae tak' aboot a dizzen parcels tae some near-haun customers, and we just walkit roon' frae door tae door. The mear's had nae mair wark nor if she had been oot in the perk at the gress a' the mornin'."

"Weel, Tam, ye canna be feedin' her as ye ought."

"My! Mr. Craig, she's just had a peck o' corn, and she was that skeich staunin' at the shop door whan we was waitin' for ye the noo, I could hardlies keep her frae rinnin' awa'."

"Weel, Tam, she maun be growin' lazy. Ye better tich her up wi' your whup."

"Dear me! Mr. Craig. I never saw Bess steppin' oot finer nor she's gaun the day. Mind, the road's geyan steep at some pairts; and noo we're comin' tae the turn, I'll hae tae pull her in, or we'll be whommled intae the ditch."

Mr. Craig was thus forced to restrain his impatience; but the restraint required no prolonged effort, for the journey was short, and he was soon landed at Mr. Boyd's gate in Inverarder.

To understand his reception here, we must follow Mr. Boyd and his daughter from the time when they left Burnside the evening before. During their short drive home both remained silent. But as soon as they reached their own fireside, Mary exclaimed, in

a tone of unusual happiness, "You seemed to enjoy yourself, father."

"Yes, indeed; it was a delightful evening. It seems to have lifted the load of our misfortune as I never dreamt it could. There are some good people in the world yet, Mary."

"Perhaps more than we imagine. I think we must go out more than we have been doing among our friends. I'm sure, father, it would cheer you up."

"I daresay. I've been moping away here too much by myself. But, do you know, I feel tired—drowsy, I mean—as I haven't been for a long time. I really feel as if I might enjoy a good sleep for once."

"Well, just wait a moment till I see if your bed's all ready."

She went to make the proposed inspection, and brought back word that the maid had had a warming pan in the bed for an hour, and that everything was ready. The two then parted for the night with more than usual tenderness and with a cheer they had not enjoyed for many a day.

Next morning, when Mary passed her father's room, she observed that the door was ajar, and knew, therefore, that he must be still in bed, as he always closed it when he got up to dress. So she

peeped in, and saw him lying sound asleep. She, therefore, went down to the dining-room, took a somewhat hurried breakfast by herself; and then, making up as tempting a little meal as she could devise for her father, with the maid's help, carried it up to his room. He opened his eyes slowly as she approached his bedside. After a momentary look of bewilderment, the sight of the breakfast brought him to a consciousness of what his daughter had planned.

"Hoots, Mary," he exclaimed; "you mustn't coddle me in that way."

But he was in too comfortable a state of sensation to be eager for a change from the warm blankets into the chill air of the room. So, with no further resistance than the feeble protest he had uttered, the breakfast was disposed of in bed amid his daughter's enlivening chat. Rising at a late hour in the forenoon, he had gone out with his daughter for a stroll before dinner. The dinner was just over, and the two were still seated at the table when Mr. Craig arrived.

"Eh! Mr. Boyd," the visitor exclaimed, as he entered the room, "I'm real gled tae see ye looking sae weel. Ye're mair like your auld sel' than I've seen ye since——"

"O, don't speak of *that*, Sandie," Mr. Boyd broke in. "I've managed tae keep it out of my thoughts for nearly twenty-four hours. I hope you haven't come to tell me any new trouble about it."

"No exackly. In fack, I was hoping I micht maybe help you tae forget it a'thegither."

"How's that, Sandie?" asked Mr. Boyd, with the eager tremor of contending feelings. "Explain what you mean."

"Weel, Mr. Boyd, I just mean what I was saying. I've been thinkin' often, this while back, it was an awfu' pity I didna pay ye what I was awin afore the bank broke. But noo, when I come tae think o't, it's better just as it is; for, if it had been paid, it micht a' hae gane the same road as the lave."

"I'm afraid it would," interjected Mr. Boyd sadly.

"Weel, ye hae aye that tae fa' back on at least."

"But, Sandie, you're cleaned out as completely as myself."

"Ye're richt there, Mr. Boyd; and it's ill takin' the breeks aff a Hielanman, as the sayin' is. But what wad ye say if I've got the loan o' a pickle money juist tae help me oot o' this trouble?"

"A loan, Sandie! Why, what security could you offer to any money-lender?"

"Weel, I'm no just at leeberty tae say what the security is. But it satisfies the pairty that's lending the money; and I'm thinking that's a' we need to care aboot. Ye'll alloo they're strong names. They're guid for the money, and a hantle mair. Ye micht read this bit note."

With these words Mr. Nicoll's letter was handed to Mr. Boyd, who looked at the signature, and then read the letter over twice. For a minute or two he remained in puzzled surprise. At last he exclaimed, "Why, Sandie, I can't understand it." Then, turning to his daughter, he said, "Do you know, Mary, it appears from this that Mr. Craig is in a position to pay me the thousand pounds due at Martinmas? And who, do you think, is lending the money?"

"Why, father, the only persons I can think of in this neighbourhood are Forbes and Company."

"Ye're a witch o' a guesser, Miss Boyd, as the sayin' is," exclaimed Mr. Craig, with a merry ring in his laugh, and a gleam over his good-natured fa

"But," continued Miss Boyd, "we've been so used to bad news for a long time, that this seems good news to be true."

"That's exackly what I said tae Mr. N wad be thinkin'," exclaimed Mr. Craig, in tone of self-satisfaction. "Sae I asked him

me this note. They burt tae believe, says I, if they see't on black and white."

And then he related more fully how it all came about from the time when the first news of the disaster set him a thinking of plans for remedy, till he hit upon the idea which he had just successfully carried out.

When he finished, Mr. Boyd said, "Well, Sandie, I don't know how we are ever to thank you."

"It was the least I could do for a man that has been aye sae kind tae me."

"You've more than repaid all I ever did," said Sandie. "You were always a good servant, and now you've proved a very good friend." Then he added after a moment's pause, "I'm glad that the business has turned out not so badly in the end."

"Aye," Mr. Craig chimed in, "a's weel that ends weel, as the savin' is. But," looking at his watch, he started up exclaiming, "I maun be off. I've hardly been half-an-hour at the gloamin' in the shop the day; and thae laddies—I'm feared they'll let everything gang tae pigs and whistles, as the sayin' is, whan my back's turned."

"Why, Sandie, they appear very sensible young men."

"That's true, Mr. Boyd. I canna compleen. I'm

real weel aff wi' my shopboys. But I aye think they're just like a guid span o' horses—they pull best whan they feel that ye hae the grup o' the reins."

At this point the maid brought in a kettle of hot water, while Miss Boyd rose and brought from the sideboard the other requisites for whisky toddy.

"You'll join me in a quiet tumbler before you go, Sandie," said Mr. Boyd.

"I daursay I'll be nane the waur o't," replied Mr. Craig reseating himself. "It'll warm me up a wee for the drive hame."

The toddy was but half-finished when the sound of wheels was heard at the gate. "That's the van!" exclaimed Mr. Craig, as he drank off what remained in his tumbler. "I've tellt the boy tae leave a pund —just a sample—o' some new tea I got last week. They say it's got an extra fine flavour. I dinna pretend to be a connishure mysel'; but Mirren and me's tried it the last twa-three mornin's, and we think it's a famous breakfast tea, specially if you drink it aff after its been maskit just aboot five or six minutes."

"But, Sandie, Mary tells me she can't get you to send in your account for some weeks back."

"O, Mr. Boyd, ye've a hantle bigger account

against me than I'll ever hae against you. Mine's no twa figgers deep, I'se warran; and, ye ken, yours is four. We'll settle a' that in guid time. I maun say good-bye the noo."

"Well, good-bye, Sandie," rejoined Mr. Boyd, shaking his visitor warmly by the hand.

Miss Boyd also took his hand with more than usual tenderness in her manner, while she said, "I haven't spoken much, Mr. Craig, because words can't tell what I feel. Ye've brought a happiness into our home that I feared was gone for ever."

"It's nae mair happiness than I'm bringin' intae my ain hame, Miss Boyd. Mirren's wearyin' tae hear a' aboot it. I had just time at the meal hoor tae tell her it was a' richt. There 'ill no be a happier woman the nicht in a' Arderholm."

CHAPTER XXII.

Sandie at Home.

"From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs."
—*Burns'* "*Cottar's Saturday Night.*"

It was late in the evening before Mr. Craig was able to leave his shop. Those were not the days of early closing, at least in manufacturing districts; and, as he had been away from his post during the greater part of the day, he stuck to it during the whole of the evening. By eight o'clock, however, the last customer had gone, the shop door was locked, and Mr. Craig went to his dwelling-house upstairs for supper. Since the bank failure, his wife had dispensed with a regular servant, merely getting a woman occasionally to do the washing of the house and help her to keep it tidy. She and her husband had become so used to the life of intimate mutual confidence, which this arrangement allowed, that they would probably have felt embarrassed, for a time

at least, by the intrusion of a servant into their little household. During supper, therefore, the husband was able to tell, with all the unrestrained kindliness of conjugal affection, the story of the day's achievement, from the moment when he had left her after breakfast to go to the office of Forbes and Company. He was right in telling Mr. Boyd and his daughter, that there would not be a happier woman than his wife in all Arderholm that night. All the time of his narrative, her face was illuminated with excess of delight. After supper, with housewifely conscientiousness, she removed the dishes, washed them in the kitchen, and then returned in trim attire to sit beside her husband. After a brief pause she laid her hand on his knee, while he laid his tenderly over hers.

"Sandie," she said, "I'm prooder o' ye the nicht than I ever was either before or since we was mairrit. I dinna see hoo I could ever hae respeckit ye if ye had tried to get oot o' that debt to Mr. Boyd, if ye had gane through the bankruptcy coort, and offered maybe a shilling in the pound, and than been like some o' thae bauld-faced bodies that fail—fail, aye maybe twa-three times—and just gang on leevin' at heck and manger ——."

"Aye, Mirren, leevin' at heck and manger, as the sayin' is ——."

"The same as if they was payin' their way like honest folk."

"But, Mirren, ye see it's no mony o' them has sic a sensible wife as I've got. I dinna see hoo I could ever hae got ower this trouble ava, if my wife had been ane o' thae spendthrift randies that never ken hoo tae jouk and let the jaw gae by, as the sayin' is. Ony way, I've never had sic a lichtsome heart since that nicht whan you and me made it up atween us. I was awfu' anxious for weeks afore that. Mony a time I had the words at the end o' my tongue, but somehoo they aye stuck in my throat."

"Man, Sandie, ye needna hae been sae awfu' put aboot. I'm sure ye micht hae seen that I was ready to meet ye half-way, and ye couldna expeck a lass tae gang ony farther than that."

"Weel, weel," said the husband interrupting his wife, "it's come oot a' richt in the end. But ——."

"O Sandie," rejoined the wife, interrupting in her turn, "never mind aboot ony *buts*. I ken weel aneuch what ye're gaun tae say. I ken it's a gey dreich look-oot for us baith for a guid mony years to come. It means you slavin' doon the stair frae mornin' tae nicht, and it means me scrimpin' and

hainin' a' I can up here frae June to January. But, losh me! we'll aye hae the Sawbath tae rest, and mony a canty crack, like this, wi' ane anither whan the day's wark's by; and what mair dae we want?"

"But," the husband still urged, "I'm sometimes awfu' vexed tae think o' you haein' tae dae a' the hoosewark yoursel'."

"Ye needna fash your thoomb aboot that, Sandie. It's far better for me. It wad be unco lonesome tae be sittin' in the hoose a' by mysel' wi' naething tae dae."

"Aye, Mirren, I often think for your sake I wad like tae hear a bit bairnie's wee feet patterin' on the floor."

"Mony a time I thocht o' that mysel', Sandie, when I was sittin' here a' my lane wi' a servant daein' the wark for me. But I haena muckle time for thae weary thochts noo."

"I'm gled ye look at it that way, Mirren. I'm sometimes geyan weel pleased, tae, wi' things just as they are. When we're a' by oorsels this way, it looks amaist as if we was gaun on wi' oor coortin' a' oor lives. It's far happier, though, than before we was mairrit. There's nae fear nor worry aboot it noo. We ken ane anither ower weel for that."

"Aye, Sandie, we maun be thankfu' that, though

we've lost a heap o' siller, it's only siller we've lost, and we're aye spared tae ane anither. I think I can see noo that the Lord kens best what's guid for us. He's made it a hantle easier for us tae bear oor misfortune than if we had a lot o' weans tae feed."

"That's true, Mirren; and ye mind me o' what Dugald M'Killop said tae me ance. He's a real guid man, Dugald. 'Sandie,' says he, 'I'm thinkin' that every true prayer just comes at last tae the Lord's ain prayer, Thy will be dune!' Noo, Mirren, it's comin' nigh time for bed. Ye micht bring the books, and we'll read oor chapter thegither."

The goodwife brought "the books"—two Bibles, and handed one to her husband. Once, long ago, he had been heard saying to an intimate friend, that he "wad like real weel to hae raigular faimily worship wi' a psawm or a hyme and a bit prayer. But, ye see, Mirren was na brocht up tae the piano the way young leddies is noo-a-days, and as for mysel' I'm as timmer-tuned as a crackit fiddle. Bless me! I could na tell ye the difference atween Auld Hunner and Scots Wha Hae, though it was tae save my life. And as for praying—weel, I aye like tae hear oor minister's prayers. They lift my heart, and mak' me wish I was a better man. But I never had ony gift that way mysel', and it wad just spoil oor readin'

gin I was tae try." So Sandie and his wife contented themselves with "reading" for their homely religious service; that is to say, they read together, verse by verse alternately, a chapter from the Bible.

"I see it's the twenty-third psalm," said the husband, as he opened his Bible at a place where he had put a mark. "I've kent every word o' that psalm ever since I mind onything. I'm thinking my mither maun hae learnt me't afore I was able to read. But a body never grows weary o' that psalm. I think it grows bonnier and bonnier the aulder we grow oorsels."

"Aye, Sandie, it's like the auld Scots sangs. Nane o' the new-fangled music, that ye hear the lads and lasses skirlin' noo-a-days, ever gangs tae your heart like them."

There was a ring of serene satisfaction in the husband's voice as he began, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." And, in spite of its provincialism, the wife's accent rose to an exultant tone in the closing verse, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." The reading of both was marked by a decidedly provincial pronunciation which might perhaps have provoked a titter among the indifferent, but it breathed a spirit

which was surely acceptable to Him for whom it was intended as a service—more acceptable than many a service ornamented with all the accessories of an elaborate ritual.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Still They Come.

"It never rains but it pours."
—*Old Proverb.*

After Mr. Boyd and his daughter were left alone by the departure of Mr. Craig, they both felt so restless from the agreeable excitement of the welcome news just received, that they could settle down to nothing in the house. So they had gone out for a brisk walk in the bracing wind which was blowing over the sea from the mountains of the North. They returned as it was growing dusk to enjoy with keener relish their early tea. They lingered over the meal longer than usual, discussing with revived hopefulness their plans for the future. On one point they were heartily united; and that was, that they should find, as soon as possible, a smaller house, and a house in Arderholm rather than Inverarder.

"I daresay, Mary," the father remarked, "you

find the extra expense of a large house like this is more than all we are saving in rent."

"I'm sure of it, father. Then don't you think it would be far more cheerful for you to be among your old friends? Many of them would drop in of an evening for an hour's chat or a rubber at whist; but they can't easily come down as far as this, especially on dark nights."

"Well, Mary, we have to move in spring at any rate; and I don't see—who can that be?"

The interruption was caused by the sound of footsteps on the gravel outside, followed by the ringing of the door-bell. A minute afterwards, the servant ushered Mr. Forbes into the parlour. The surprise, excited by the unexpected arrival, was almost completely overcome by the joy it evoked both in father and in daughter. The former rose, and advanced to meet his visitor with a rapidity of movement which he had scarcely ever exhibited since he was a young man. Miss Boyd also was stirred for the moment to a more than usually demonstrative manner, but seemed to check herself while her father was shaking hands with Mr. Forbes, and showed her feeling only by an excess of charm in her smile, and of heartiness in the grasp of her hand.

Mr. Boyd shrank at first from any reference to the

news which Mr. Craig had brought in the afternoon, but felt at the same time that it would be ungrateful not to refer to it at all. He, therefore, only said in a general way, "Mr. Craig has been here, and I need not tell you how deeply my daughter and I feel indebted to you."

"Why, Mr. Boyd, you are not under any particular obligation to me. Our arrangement with Mr. Craig is strictly a business transaction, likely to be advantageous on both sides. Of course, it gives both parties an additional satisfaction in a case of this kind, when they find that the advantage of their transaction extends to others as well. But I ought to explain, that whatever trouble was required to make the transaction satisfactory, was undertaken by Mr. Nicoll; and I feel very much indebted to him for saving me a good deal of work, and doing it far more thoroughly than I could have done. But perhaps you'll excuse me for changing the subject rather abruptly. I have a commission from Mr. Nicoll. He couldn't execute it himself this evening; and as I was coming down to your neighbours, the Dymocks, at any rate, I undertook to call here on my way."

"It takes you a good little bit out of your way, Mr. Forbes," urged Mr. Boyd.

"Not more than a few minutes' walk," was the rejoinder. "Besides, I was glad to have an opportunity of calling to see if you were none the worse of being out, and if you got home safely, last night. And by the bye, that reminds me that mother enjoined me to make that inquiry specially for her."

"It's very kind of you and your mother. I assure you, both Mary and I have been speaking repeatedly to-day of the pleasant evening we enjoyed."

"Well, Mr. Boyd, both mother and I have been speaking of it too. It seems to have done her a world of good. I have never seen her so cheerful since—since the great sorrows of last summer—but I'm forgetting my commission. If it is successful, we may find it a good deal easier to enjoy such pleasant evenings. I don't know that I can explain my commission better than by asking you to read this letter. I am not sure, of course, that it will exactly meet your views, but I *am* sure that you will find it is written in a very good spirit."

Mr. Boyd took the letter that was handed to him, and read it in silence. Then turning to his daughter, he said, "Why, Mary, this letter is on the very proposal we were talking about when Mr. Forbes came in. Just listen."

He then read as follows :—

Still They Come.

"My Dear Nicoll,

"May I presume upon an old college friendship to ask a favour? You may remember that for some years I have suffered from trouble in the throat, which my doctor believes to be due to the atmosphere of Glasgow, tainted by smoke and a thousand other impurities. I have long meditated removing my residence elsewhere, but have delayed owing to the convenience of being near my business. Recently, however, my doctor has become peremptory, in fact, tells me he will not be responsible for the consequences, and so on. Fortunately, also, now my son relieves me of a great deal of the burden of business. I can thus in general be away at any time for a few days; and, consequently, in seeking a change I am not restricted to the neighbourhood of the city. In fact it seems desirable to get as complete a change as possible by removing to some distance. Now, ever since I first visited Inverarder I have liked the place. I have often run down there, and stayed at the Kelburn Arms Hotel from Saturday to Monday. So when I saw Mr. Boyd's villa advertised for sale the other day, I went immediately to look after it. I know the house from the outside, I have had a consultation with the architect who built it; and the result of all my enquiries is so satisfactory, that I have concluded the purchase.

"But here comes my difficulty. I am anxious to move at once. In fact, if I don't go to Inverarder, I must go elsewhere out of town. But I am in-

formed that Mr. Boyd has been allowed the use of his house to Whitsunday. It occurs to me, however, that, as he is going to remove at any rate, he might be open to an offer for a lease of the house during the remainder of his tenure. Still it is a somewhat delicate question to open, especially with a man who deserves such kindly consideration as one of the victims of the recent bank disaster. As a stranger I shrink from writing to Mr. Boyd directly; but I thought that you, as a friend of his, would probably be in a position to approach him on the subject. That is my reason for begging the favour of your services in the negotiation.

"Let me add that, if agreeable to Mr. Boyd, it would be a great convenience to me to take the house off his hands, furnished just as it is, till the term. I understand that the furniture is mostly new, so that it may not have any strong associations for Mr. Boyd as yet. We might therefore ultimately come to some agreement about its purchase, if he should find it convenient to part with it altogether.

"I need not say further that, as I am begging a favour of Mr. Boyd, I take for granted that he must be approached in a spirit of generosity, different from that of driving a bargain. I could not feel comfortable, therefore, under any arrangement which did not give him a liberal rent for house and furniture, if he is willing to entertain my proposal.

"Yours very truly,

"Alan Campbell."

"The letter," said Mr. Boyd, as he returned it to Forbes, "is certainly written in a very courteous tone."

"It seemed so to me, too," rejoined Forbes; "and therefore I thought I could not introduce the subject with more tact than Mr. Campbell does himself. Did I understand you to say that you and Miss Boyd were talking on the subject when I came in?"

"Yes; it was a curious coincidence."

"Well, I may say that, from a remark you made last night, I thought it probable that you would not be unwilling to consider a proposal of this kind, else I might have felt a little hesitation in undertaking this commission. But probably you may wish to think over the proposal before making up your mind. I thought I might leave Mr. Campbell's letter with you, and you could let Mr. Nicoll know your decision to-morrow."

"Oh! I don't think that's necessary," said Miss Boyd, partly to Forbes, partly to her father. She was eager to get the matter settled at once, not only to make sure of an offer so advantageous and so unexpected, but also to make sure of her father's present willingness and hopefulness. For his spirit had been so crushed by his misfortune, that she was afraid he might relapse into the helpless despair

which would leave him without energy or courage to make the proposed change. So she took the matter in hand herself, and went on, "Father and I had fully made up our minds before you came. We thought we could save more in a smaller house than we are saving in rent at present."

"Well, Miss Boyd," said Forbes, "of course you observe that any difficulty on that score is removed by Mr. Campbell's offer. I presume, from its liberal tone, that you will get from him a good deal more than you will require to pay for the rent of another house, such as you want."

"Yes, Mr. Forbes; that's why in our circumstances there can't be a moment's hesitation about accepting the offer. The only difficulty is about the furniture. We hadn't thought of that; and——"

"Excuse me for interrupting you, Miss Boyd. But I have another commission—a commission from Mrs. Nicoll—that may help you to decide about the furniture, at least for the present. You remember Mrs. Rankin?"

"Of course," was the answer from both father and daughter.

"You remember that she lost her husband two or three years ago, and that, as her house is larger than she requires, she has had Mr. Macdonald, teller in

the Bank of Scotland, occupying a couple of rooms as a lodger. Now, it seems that Mr. Macdonald has received an appointment elsewhere, and leaves on Saturday. Mrs. Nicoll called on Mrs. Rankin this afternoon, and learnt that you could have a parlour and two bedrooms any time after that. I don't know about the house myself, but Mrs. Nicoll says the rooms are very nicely furnished."

"Oh!" exclaimed Miss Boyd, with glad eagerness in her voice and manner, "I've called several times on Mrs. Rankin, and know her house well. It's very comfortably furnished indeed. Father," she continued, turning to Mr. Boyd, "there couldn't be a better arrangement. This gets over the difficulties we dreaded most—looking out for a new house, and all the discomforts of flitting at this season. Here we have a nice arrangement that will give us time to look after a house for ourselves by and by, and to make any plan that may be most convenient about the furniture."

Mr. Boyd was carried away by his daughter's eagerness and, though somewhat passively, yielded assent to all she said. The result was, that Forbes left with a commission to Mr. Nicoll to negotiate a lease with Mr. Campbell. The negotiation was easily concluded, the lessee agreeing to pay sixty

pounds for the rent. With kindly thoughtfulness, he also suggested that, as Mr. Boyd must be put to some immediate expense by giving up his house and furniture, half at least of the rent ought to be paid in advance, and he enclosed his cheque for the amount.

Accordingly, the following week, Mr. Boyd and his daughter removed to Arderholm. They took with them Miss Boyd's piano, their books (for they had a very fair, though small library), and a few other articles with endearing associations. The removal of these had been undertaken by Mr. Nicoll, who sent three or four men under the superintendence of Mike Sullivan. Mr. Boyd and his daughter were at Mrs. Rankin's to receive the things as they arrived. When the piano was being put in its place, Mr. Boyd turned to Mary and said, "That seems a very intelligent and obliging young man that's superintending." Then, when the work was completed, he turned to Mike and said, "I'm sure you must be tired with your exertion. A piano's no light article to handle. I think you had better all wait till we get you a glass of spirit."

"Thank you, Mr. Boyd," replied Mike, "but I never tasted whusky but ainee a' my life; and I made sic a fule o' mysel' than, that I've never let a

drap o't wat my lips sinsyne. The lads that's wi' me are a' teetotalers tae. Mr. Nicoll left me tae get ony o' the men I wanted, and I dinna like tae hae men at a job that are aye takin' a dram whenever they get a chance. Ye canna lippen tae them. Sae I pickit oot some that's teetotalers like mysel'. But though we dinna drink, Mr. Boyd, we're thankfu' for your kindness a' the same."

"Well, though I am not a teetotaler myself, I respect your principles. Perhaps for young men yours is the safest policy. It keeps them out o' temptation at all events. Certainly you all do credit to your principles by your conduct to-day in helping my daughter and me. We are very much obliged to you all for the care you have taken with everything."

"It's a pleasure tae obleege ye, sir. I kent Miss Boyd langsyne, though I see she doesna mind o' me noo."

Mary looked with a perplexed expression for a few moments, and then said, "I'm sorry that I can't remember having met you before; but then, you know, I was away from home for a long time."

"Maybe ye'll mind my name, Miss—Mike Sullivan."

The name was associated with such horror in

Mary's memory, that the sound of it raised a momentary shudder. The feeling, however, vanished as she looked at the pleasant young man into whom the *bête noir* of her girlhood had developed.

"Why," she said with a smile which awoke a chivalrous enthusiasm in Mike, "you're so changed, that it's no wonder I didn't recognise you."

"I'm real prood tae hear ye say that, Miss. I would be geyan mortified if ye thocht I was the same feckless ne'er-dae-weel as whan ye kent me at the scule lang syne."

"Well, I'm very glad to meet you again, and thank you very much for your help to-day. I'm sure I don't know how we could have got my piano removed without you."

As she spoke, she held out her hand, and Mike took it with an awkward bashfulness, while he said, blushing, "Ye're ower kind, Miss. It'll aye be a pleasure tae me tae dae onything for ye."

And he turned, and went off with a feeling of elation, as if he had been in the presence of royalty.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A Love Episode.

"A creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food,
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears and smiles."

—*Wordsworth.*

Mike Sullivan's enthusiasm with regard to Miss Boyd led to some results that he did not anticipate. He was now allowed to visit in the kitchen at Burnside on any evening on which it was convenient that Janet should receive him. Under the sanction of this privilege, he was sitting beside his sweetheart on the evening of the day on which he had assisted Mr. Boyd and his daughter at their removal to Arderholm. He was relating to Janet the incidents of the day; but instead of his narrative being listened to with the gratified interest with which it was given, he was startled to find that it fell like a spark on the extremely explosive temper of his sweetheart.

"My! Janet," he exclaimed, as he reached the climax of his story, "yon's a wonnerfu' bonny young leddy. I dinna think I ever saw sic a bonny face a' my life."

"Humph!" retorted Janet, with a sound between a faint snort and a decided sneer.

Mike, seeing the approach of a storm, employed a charm which he had often found effective in laying the storm-spirit before. He slipped his arm round Janet's waist, and whispered in the most insinuating tone, "The present company's aye excepted, Janet, ye ken."

"Oo aye," she retorted again, as she pushed him away with rather rude force, "nane o' your butter for me. Ye're just like the lave o' the lads, Mike. Ye canna see a bonny face withoot gaun daft aboot it."

"Hoots, Janet," he pleaded, "I'm sure ye ken there's nae face half as bonny tae me as your ain."

And the soothing plea was apparently calming the ruffled spirit of Janet, when Mike unfortunately stirred the storm afresh by adding, "And ye maun alloo I was just saying what everybody says aboot Miss Boyd. Forbye, Janet, though I'm sure she's as grand as ony queen, she's no a bit prood."

"I wad like tae ken what she has tae be prood

aboot. Her faither's lost every fa'rdin he had, and ye've tell't me yoursel' that they're turned oot o' hoose and ha'."

"Weel, Janet, that's no her faut, puir thing! no, nor her faither's naither. I'm sure everybody's vex't tae see sic a daicent, honest man brocht doon by a wheen scoondrels at his time o' life. And there's mony a leddy brocht tae poverty, no hauf sae bonny as Miss Boyd, that hauds her heid as heich as ever, and turns up her nose at us working-folk. But that's no her way. Braw though she is, she spoke wi' me and shakit hauns wi' me, just as if she was ane o' oorsel's. And sic a haun, Janet! I never fand onything like it a' my life. The feathers on a doo's breist's naethin' tae't for saftness."

"Eh! Mike, I see what ye're efter noo. Aye weel, ye can gang and try your luck there if ye like, and see if she doesna turn up her nose at ye, just like the ither leddies ye was speakin' aboot. But if ye're wantin' tae sae guid-bye tae me, I'll save ye the trouble, Mike. Guid-bye!"

With that Janet swept out of the kitchen, making her skirt swinge against the door, which she slammed with noisy violence behind her. Janet's temper however, commonly collapsed as quickly as it was roused. So she returned to the kitchen in a few minutes, but

was mortified to find that Mike had taken her at her word and was gone. She remained in a state of irritation with herself all next day, unable to free herself from the fear that she had strained Mike's affection too far, and that he might never come back. In the evening, however, she was comforted by his re-appearance, and she did her best to make him forget the treatment he had received, not only by giving him an unusually hearty welcome, but by maintaining an unusual graciousness of manner during his visit.

"Eh! Mike," she exclaimed, as he showed his face at the door, "I'm real gled tae see ye. What way did ye tak' me up sae quick yestreen?"

"Dear me! Janet, it was you took me up ower quick. I thocht ye maun hae risen on your wrang side in the morning."

"I mean, Mike, ye shouldna be sae ready tae tak me at my word. A lass canna be aye hauden tae everything she says when she tak's the tantrums. And I wasna real angry wi' ye ava. I was just a wee bit nettled, but it was a' by in a jiffy.'

"Bless me! Janet, ye lookit for a' the world as if ye had gane clean gyte. Thinks I tae mysel', 'The lassie's in a creel; I'd better let her alane for a wee.' Sae aff I goes."

"Losh! Mike, ye maun hae gane aff just like stoor afore the win'. For I was back in the kitchen, I'm sure, afore ye could say Jake Robison; and ye werena tae be seen, though I lookit a' roon about the door."

"But what was't that nettled ye sae muckle, Janet?"

"I'm sure, Mike, ye micht ken that nae woman likes tae hear her lad praisin' anither lass to her face."

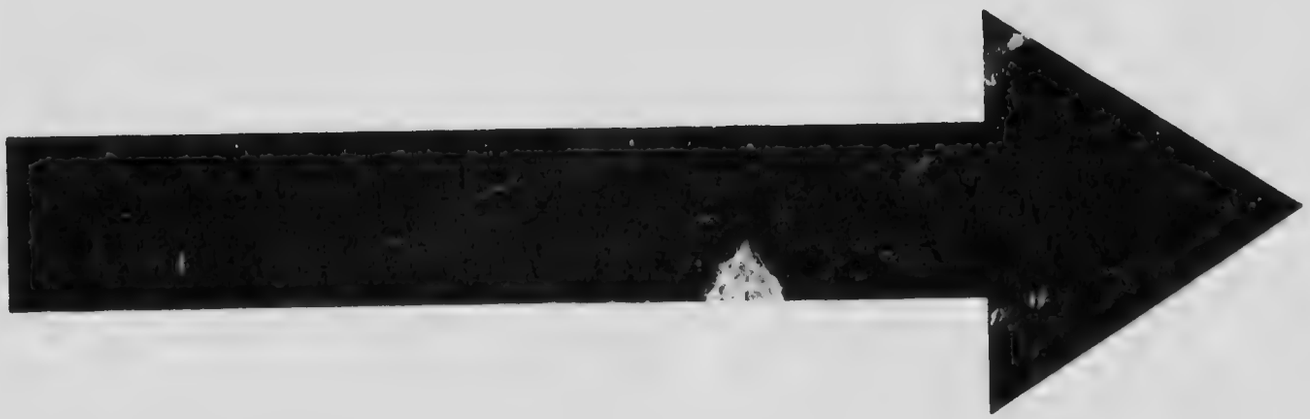
"O, Janet, I'm awfu' ashamed aboot what ye said. I dinna see hoo I can ever look Miss Boyd in the face again. To think I wad ever even mysel' wi' her! I trow, the maister himsel's no ower guid for her."

"What! Maister Weeliam George! Ma certes, she'll fa' on her feet gin she gets him."

"Weel, Janet, tae tak' ye up in you ain words, gin he gets her, as the auld sang says,

'He'll fa' on his feet for a wife.'"

"I daursay, Mike, he micht gang faurer and fare waur as they say. I suppose I maun alloo what ye've said aboot her, for everybody says the same thing, that she's the bonniest lass in a' this kintra side.



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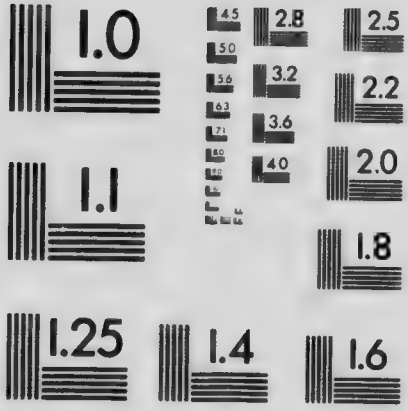

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But, man! Mike, ye needna be aye castin' up tae me that I'm no as bonny as her."

"Whan did I ever sae that, Janet?"

"Aweel, Mike, gin she had as muckle soopin' and washin' and scoorin' and scrubbin' as I've had a' my days, I'se warran' her face wad maybe be just as coorse, and her hauns as hard as mine."

"Janet," exclaimed Mike, firing up, "wha daurs tae sae your face is coorse, or your hauns hard? If onybody but yoursel' was to say that afore me, by George, I wad gie him as muckle as wad learn him tae keep a ceevil tongue in his heid a' his life efter. I wager ye he wadna say't a second time."

Janet was not displeased at this explosion of her lover's indignation, but, as she was on her good behaviour this evening, thought it wiser to avoid further irritation, and therefore adopted a soothing tone.

"Aweel, Mike," she replied, "there's nae gude in us makin' fules o' oorsel's, quarrelling aboot this ony mair. I tell't ye that ye've got everybody on your side. 'Deed, the mistress hersel's just as daft as the lave o' ye aboot the young leddy. Aye, even auld Kirstie havers aboot her whiles, 'spaicially since that day when Miss Boyd wore a shawl that Kirstie brocht her to keep her warm whan she was gaun oot

in the carriage wi' the mistress—though I'm sure she made her a perfect fright. That bonny young craitur—she canna be muckle ower twenty, I'm thinkin'——"

"I daursay, no," Mike chimed in.

"Aweel, whan she turned her back tae show aff the shawl, wad ye believe't, Mike, she just lookit, for a' the worl', as auld-like as Kirstie hersel' whan she gangs aff tae the kirk in her auld-fashioned shawl?"

"I can hardlies believe that, Janet."

"But it's as true's death, Mike. Hoosomever, it doesna maitter. I was gaun tae tell ye a saicret; but ye needna tell't tae onybody, for I dinna like tae hear folk cleish-ma-claverin' aboot things they hae naething tae dae wi'; but d'ye ken?"—here Janet lowered her voice to a whisper, and assumed the manner of making a confidential communication —"I jaloose, the mistress wad be gey weel pleased gin the young maister was tae mak' it up wi' the young leddy. Troth, I think mysel', they wad mak' a real braw couple. They're real weel matched."

"Weel, Janet, they say mairrages is made in heiven, and I think that ane wad look ge. like as if it had been made up there." Then he added, with

a merry twinkle in his eye, "Maybe oors is made there, tae, Janet."

"Gae awa' wi' your nonsense. Ye maun gang hame noo; for I've tae blacklead the grates the morn's mornin' afore the fires is kennled, and I'll hae tae get up by five o'clock, and ye see it's just on the chap o' nine. I maun get awa' tae my bed noo, or I'll never wauken in time."

CHAPTER XXV.

Another Episode of Love.

"Indeed he seemed
Scarce other than my own ideal knight."
—*Idylls of the King.*

The day after the Boyds were settled at Mrs. Rankin's, when Mr. Nicoll came home to dinner, his wife said to him, "I would like you to keep yourself free for this evening. Mrs. Forbes was here this morning to say that Willie suggested we might all drop in at Mrs. Rankin's for half-an-hour in the evening, just to give an informal welcome to Mr. Boyd and Mary. Don't you think it's a good idea? It would cheer them, and help to make them feel at home amid their new surroundings."

A smile played over the husband's features while his wife was speaking, so that, out of sheer sympathy, she could not help smiling too; and as he did not reply immediately, she asked, "What is it that

amuses you, Jamie? Is there anything funny about the proposal?"

"Oh no! goodwife, it's a very kindly proposal, and I go in with it heartily. You say it came from Willie?"

"Yes. What about that?"

"Oh! nothing particular. Only I couldn't help thinking"—and he paused.

"Thinking what?" urged his wife.

"Why, last week, when I got that letter from Alan Campbell, and was wondering how I could get it communicated in a nice way to Mr. Boyd, I was just a little impressed with the readiness with which Willie volunteered his services. I don't say that the intended visit to the Dymocks was an invention for the occasion. I have no doubt he intended to make the visit at some time, perhaps that very evening. But—well, I had my own thoughts on the subject: and when this new proposal came from him, you can't wonder that my thoughts ran off in the same direction again."

"Why, Jamie," said Mrs. Nicoll laughing, "your reasoning's like a good many other cases of putting this and that together. The 'this' and 'that' don't seem to have any very clear connection."

"My dear wifie," replied the husband, keeping up

the laugh, "don't dignify my funny thoughts with the name of reasoning. They're so amusing, that they made me smile; and that's all I meant to explain. Of course, however, that's between you and me. I'd be sorry to originate any tittle-tattle, that might put an awkward barrier between Mary and Willie when they meet."

"I'm afraid," interrupted the wife, "the tittle-tattle's begun already."

"Well, I can't help thinking we'll soon find there's some ground for it. I daresay, Willie is not conscious himself of the direction in which he is moving. But—well, I'm convinced that his fate is decided."

"I wish Fate were always as wise in its decisions."

"So do I."

The suggestion of William Forbes was thus carried out, and with happy effect. When the four friends met in Mrs. Rankin's parlour, Mr. Nicoll opened the conversation in his happiest vein.

"Why, Mr. Boyd," he exclaimed, with an almost jovial ring in his voice, "you look as comfortable here as if it had been your abode for years. I'm glad to see you back among us. It'll give your friends a chance of renewing old acquaintance."

"Yes, Mr. Nicoll, I do feel quite at home already. This has been a good move, I think; and we're very

much indebted to you for the trouble you've taken in bringing it about."

The conversation, thus started, went on for half-an-hour, skimming over a number of indifferent topics. Then Mrs. Forbes rose, and begged to be excused for going off so early. "This is not intended," she said, "for a visit. We just called a few minutes to see how you are in your new home, but we hope to see a great deal more of you by and by."

Two or three evenings afterwards, Mrs. Forbes made a quiet party for the Boyds, with only the doctor and the parish minister in addition to Mr. and Mrs. Nicoll. This was followed during the next week or two by several similar parties among Mr. Boyd's old friends. At these it was observed that William Forbes usually spent a good part of the evening in conversation with Mr. Boyd. Consequently, he was not altogether taken by surprise when his mother said to him one evening at tea, "I think, Willie, if you've nothing better to do to-night, you might go down and have an hour's chat with Mr. Boyd. Mary was calling this afternoon, and she told me how much her father enjoys your conversation. It seems to cheer him more than any-

thing. It would be a real blessing, she says, if you could spare an hour now and then for a chat."

"I can return Mr. Boyd's compliment. I find him a most intelligent and well-read man, and I enjoy his conversation immensely. But, then, I don't like to leave you alone these long winter evenings."

"Oh! never mind about me, Willie. I can get on very well by myself for a little at any time. But I told Mary that one good turn deserves another, and that she ought to come and keep me company while you are with her father."

"That would be a capital arrangement, mother. It'll make the evening cheerful for you as well as for Mr. Boyd." Then he added, after a moment's reflection, "It's not more than five minutes' walk to Mrs. Rankin's. I'll go down and bring Miss Boyd up here. Then I can come back and see her home."

"I'm real glad, Willie, that you're pleased wi' the plan. Ye seem aye sae cool about that bonny young creature, that I was afraid you wouldna care to take the trouble."

"Hoots, mother, I admire Miss Boyd very much, though I don't get exactly daft about her."

"Ye'll maybe de daft enough about her before long, my son."

"I'll risk it, mother."

With that he sallied out, and returned in a few minutes with the young lady. Again he returned about nine o'clock, and escorted her home. This arrangement proved satisfactory to all concerned, and was repeated for some time, at intervals of two or three days.

One Wednesday evening about a month after the arrangement began, Mrs. Forbes and her son were just finishing tea, when she said, "Are you going to call on Mr. Boyd to-night? I havena seen Mary this week, except at church on Sabbath; and I begin to feel as if there was something wanting, when such a long time passes without seeing her."

"I'm glad, mother, that you enjoy her company so much," was the reply, in a tone that still struck the mother with its indifference.

She went on therefore, as if to vindicate her own attachment:

"You don't know, Willie, how good she is; I'm sure no daughter could be more affectionate to her mother." Then she added, half to herself, "And the truth is, I hardly think any mother could be fonder of her daughter;"

"Well, mother, she'll be here in a few minutes,"

said the son, apparently touched at last with consideration for his mother's feeling.

He rose at once and went out. When he was ushered into the parlour at Mrs. Rankin's, he found Miss Boyd alone.

"O, Mr. Forbes," she exclaimed, "I'm so sorry. Father has caught a cold, and I succeeded in persuading him that his bed is the best cure. He went off half-an-hour ago."

"Please don't disturb him then. But I'm afraid I must take you with me. Mother can't live without you a day longer. She says she hasn't seen you this week. Do you think you can leave your father?"

"I daresay I might. Indeed, I don't expect to see him till morning at any rate. But I'll go and see what he says."

She came back in a few minutes, dressed to go out. "Excuse me," she said, "for keeping you so long, but I thought it would save time if I got ready at once after seeing father."

The two then started for Burnside. The night was exceptionally clear for a Scottish winter. The moon was full; a light breeze blew from the north, giving an unusual transparency to the atmosphere, while the stars shone with all the brilliance possible in presence of a brilliant moon. But the walk to

Burnside was too short to allow Miss Boyd and her escort more than a passing observation of the peculiar beauty of the night.

In the parlour at Burnside the evening passed in quiet conversation, such as had been the entertainment of Miss Boyd's former visits, except that it was varied by the presence of William Forbes. When the time came for Miss Boyd to leave, he said to Mrs. Forbes, "It's a splendid night, mother. If you won't be anxious about me, after I see Miss Boyd home, I think I'll take a stroll for an hour."

"I daresay the walk will do you good," his mother replied. "But you'd better throw your plaid over you. The night's cold."

"Well, mother, I'll take it at any rate. Perhaps Miss Boyd may want it."

"That's right, my son; I'm glad to see you taking care of her. Mind, she's precious." Then, drawing Mary to her and kissing her affectionately, she said, "Good-night, dear. Take care of the cold when you go out."

"You'd better say good-night to me too, mother," said the son.

"Oh! I'll see you again when you come back."

"But please don't sit up for me."

"Well, I won't, if you're very late. But you're

not to stay out very long. Remember you have always to be up early."

The door was closed, and the two were out in the calm stillness under the moonlight and the starlight. Who can say that the mystic brilliances, to which the va[illegible]hing sun[illegible]s place, wield no influence over the life of man? [illegible]ir influence, indeed, is not that of a coarse and unintelligible magic, such as an e[illegible]loded astrology endeavoured to master. But a spell, subtle though not unintelligible, mysterious though not irrational, mightier than the trickery of any magician, entrances the spirit in receptive moods under the weird enchantment of a moonlit and starlit night.

Miss Boyd and her companion were both at first awed into silence by the impressiveness of the scene to which they were ushered. But continual silence on the part of two people walking together becomes rather awkward, and the young lady was, perhaps naturally, the first to feel the awkwardness. After a commonplace remark about the loveliness of the night, she asked, "Do you often take late walks like this?"

"Well," replied her companion, "in summer I do, when the gloamings are long. But in winter it's

only a rare evening like this that tempts one out of doors."

With her young health and cultured sentiment, Mary was evidently exhilarated by the varied physical and spiritual influences of the scene. After a minute's pause she said, "If girls were as independent as men, I think I would often enjoy a walk like this."

Forbes was beginning to feel that his walk would become decidedly tamer when he should be left alone, that it would be unspeakably delicious to prolong the sweet companionship he was enjoying. Her words, therefore, started a hope which struck a quicker pulse at his heart, and the surge of quickened emotion throbbed through him with such violence that he found it difficult to check it from manifesting itself in a tremor of voice. He could only say, in the subdued tone of repressed excitement, "I suppose it's too much to ask you to join me to-night?"

"I'm afraid I'd spoil your walk."

"Spoil! How?"

"I thought you preferred to be alone."

"Why should you think that? My walks are often solitary, not from choice, but from necessity—simply because I have no companion. But to-night

it would be infinitely more delightful if I had—if you were to go with me."

"Well, how far are you going?"

"Just as far as you care to go."

By this time they were opposite Mrs. Rankin's; and Mary, looking across the road, said, "All seems quiet over the way. If you're sure, now, Mr. Forbes, that I'll not be intruding, it would be a real favour to let me go with you."

The two were thus led to continue their walk together, and enjoyed an opportunity, such as had never been given them before, of becoming intimately acquainted with each other. Their conversation at first touched lightly on a few commonplaces; but, from the circumstances in which they were thrown together, it gradually narrowed its range within topics that specially concerned themselves. Mary was led to tell a great deal, that her companion had never heard, about her studies and her life in general when she was at school on the Continent; and as confidence grew between them, he unfolded to her the outline of his plans, about which she had hitherto received nothing but a brief hint now and then from his mother. He was stirred to enthusiasm by the interest which his companion seemed to feel. Of course, it was merely a brief sketch that he was

able to give, and the sketch was interrupted only by a word or two of sympathetic interest from the listener.

When he seemed to have finished his explanation, she said simply, but with intense expressiveness of tone, "It's so noble, Mr. Forbes; it seems to open new ideals of life that I had never dreamt of before."

They had now reached the bend in the road where it turns down to Inverarder. It was the spot where, some years before, Willie had come upon Mary in tears after his encounter with Mike Sullivan. It is the point where the splendid panorama of the firth opens suddenly on the view; and on this evening, when they reached the familiar spot, the moonlight not only flooded the vast scene, but, owing to the change in the direction of the road, fell now straight upon their faces. It is a commonplace, but a commonplace which never loses its import, that a familiar object, seen under a new light or from a new point of view, regains the charm of novelty, transcending that influence of familiarity by which the feelings are apt to be dulled. It was such a charm that overpowered Forbes, as he and his companion came to this turn of the road. There was a mellow richness in the tone with which she spoke about the

new ideals of life that were dawning upon her mind, and this peculiarity of tone had drawn his eyes towards her. She was just uttering the closing words of her remark, when her face, which he could see but dimly in the shade, was suddenly touched with the splendour of the moonlight. Her motion, as well as her voice, was abruptly arrested by the glory of the new scene, and she exclaimed, "Isn't that exquisite?" The words were simple enough, and might have borne little meaning, but they were charged with a peculiar force by the glance of eyes that glistened and trembled under the thrill of life's higher sentiment. For the words, being in the form of a question or appeal, naturally led her to raise her eyes to his, as if she were looking for his answer, his assent. He, too, was arrested, but arrested by the witchery of those eyes and the marvellous beauty of the features in which they were set; while their charm was enhanced by the weird light in which they were now seen for the first time. While she still looked for his answer to her appeal, he began in a tone of such peculiar earnestness that it attracted her attention as her tone had attracted his. Passing over her appeal about the beauty of the scene, and going back upon her previous remark, he said, "From the sympathy and interest you have shown,

I think you might help me to realise the ideals you were speaking about."

Her eyes seemed to gather an additional fascination from the eagerness with which she inquired, "O, Mr. Forbes, you expect too much from anything I could do. I'm only an ignorant girl. How could I ever help you in such a noble work?"

"By becoming my wife," was the trembling reply.

The effect was electric. Instantaneously her eyes were withdrawn, her head drooped, her whole frame seemed to lose its firmness, and she leant against Forbes as if she might have fallen to the ground, had it not been for his support. A full minute of silence must have passed—a minute of agony for Forbes, of agony not only for his own future, but for the present state of his companion.

At last he exclaimed, "Forgive me, Miss Boyd. I might have known that I had no chance. You've always behaved with such propriety, kept me at such a cool distance, that I might have known you didn't want me to make any nearer advance. I've been trying all these weeks to convince myself of this; I've tried even to think that I didn't care about you myself. But to-night I've been fairly carried away. Forgive me for this once, and I'll promise never to bother you again."

Such at least was the purport of the words that were jerked from him in incoherent fragments.

At last he was interrupted by his companion raising her head and turning her eyes upon him, while she pleaded, "Oh! you're mistaken. It's you that have to forgive me, William George."

The sound of the old name by which he had been known in boyhood seemed like an echo from school-days of the sweet girlish voice which had so pleasantly acknowledged his boyish chivalry.

"May I call you Mary?" he asked, as he passed his arm round her, and drew her to him with a glad confidence.

"Yes," she replied, "if you're not c. ided with me for calling you William George."

And while she spoke, she still entranced him with those bewitching eyes; and he saw, or thought he saw, a certain pouting of the lips, as if they were begging to be kissed. And he kissed them again and again, with a passionate fervour which was returned. It seemed as if neither could be satisfied with the new joy that had burst upon their lives. And then Mary began to explain, in language as fragmentary, as incoherent, as her lover's, how she too had been under an erroneous impression.

"I was silent just now," she said, "because I was

simply stunned by a sudden surprise. I can scarcely even yet realise that you are actually standing there, and have asked me to be your wife. It seems still just like a dream; and it's such a beautiful dream. I'm afraid it may vanish. I hardly know what to say yet. I'm sure I'm talking foolishly, but I must tell you all. If I made you cool and distant by my manner, you made me the same. You can't imagine what an effort all this has cost me, how constantly I've had to be on my guard. For I felt that, if I ever indulged in more than the common civilities, I'd give myself away altogether. I don't think any girl ever can have loved as I have done. It seems as if I had loved you, Willie, ever since I can remember anything. I know for sure I've loved you ever since the day when you were my little champion at school. And all the time I was away from home, though young fellows sometimes showed me some attentions as they do to other girls, the memory of you always came back upon me to keep me from thinking of anybody but yourself as a possible lover or husband for me. Just the other day, when I was reading the new volume of Tennyson you lent me, with its beautiful dedication to the memory of Prince Albert, I couldn't help repeating, with a childish, perhaps, but a delightful, application of my own—

"'Indeed he seems to me
Scarce other than my own ideal Knight.'"

The listener had interrupted the delicious confession two or three times with an ineffectual protest; but at this point he broke in more energetically, "O, please stop, Mary; I'm afraid I'll have to call that childish too, and a *mis*application besides. I feel painfully humbled by all you've told me. I'm so unworthy of your goodness, Mary, I fear there's a terrible disappointment before you when you come down from your high ideal, and find you have to do with a very commonplace reality."

"No, no, Willie, there's no fear of that. I know you better than you know yourself. You'll be the champion of the poor workers of the world, and of the innocent victims of misfortune, as you were the champion of the injured little school-girl long ago."

It seemed as if the pent-up feeling of years, now that restraint was withdrawn, had to flow out, spreading its abundance of joy over her own life as well as that of her lover. They still remained in the same beautiful spot, enjoying the solitude and the stillness of the scene.

But at last Forbes put in a reminder, "I'm afraid, Mary, we must begin to think of mother. I'm sure she'll be sitting up still. Should we not go

and tell her? I have a suspicion that she will be almost as overjoyed as ourselves."

"What makes you think so?"

"It would take some time to tell you all my reasons. But, this evening before I went out, she said that no daughter could be more affectionate to a mother than you have been to her, and that no mother could be fonder of a daughter."

"Well, Willie," replied Mary, while her eyes glistened with tears of utter happiness, "if I humbled you, you humble me more. What have I ever done to make me worthy of love from you or your mother?"

"Let us go then and make mother happy."

"That will be delightful."

As they turned to start homeward, Forbes attention was drawn to the plaid which had hung unnoticed on his arm. "Why!" he exclaimed, "here I've been carrying this plaid all the time, and never thought of offering it to you."

"Oh! you need it yourself more than I do."

"But, see!" he went on, as he unfolded the plaid, "it's a good old-fashioned Scotch plaid. Just look at the length of it."

"Oh! that's splendid!" she rejoined with a merry laugh. "It will cover us both."

And taking hold of one end, she drew it over her left shoulder, while he drew the other end over his right; and the two ends were tucked cosily together by joining hands. Each was thus also led by a natural convenience to slip the disengaged arm round the other's waist.

"Now," she said, with the same merry ring in her voice, "we'll go *bras dessus, bras dessons.*"

Off they started. It seemed as if both felt a reaction from their long pause at the turn of the road. Both, too, were eager to carry the glad news to Mrs. Forbes. They walked, therefore, at a brisk pace, and were soon at Burnside. The click of the iron gate had evidently caught the ear of Mrs. Forbes, for her shadow was seen flitting across the window-blind as if she were moving to the door. She did really open the door before the two lovers reached it. There was a merry light in the eyes of both, as they saw her perplexity.

"Why, children," she exclaimed, as they all entered the parlour and shut the door, "what's the meaning of this?"

"Well, mother, I heard you say to-night that no daughter could be more affectionate to her mother than Mary has been to you. So she's come back

to ask you if you'll take her for a daughter really and truly."

Instead of answering her son, the mother, turning to Mary, asked, "And are you really going to be Willie's wife?" as if it were the realisation of a long-cherished hope, but a realisation too delightful to be believed all at once.

"Yes," was the reply, "if he hasn't changed his mind." And her exuberant gladness still sparkled in her eyes and rang out in her voice. "But he was quite willing to have me half-an-hour ago."

Mrs. Forbes had just risen from her reading of the Bible—an occupation for closing the day which had become more punctiliously regular and of more fervid devotion since the solemn tragedy through which her home had passed during the previous summer. When she was disturbed by the sound at the gate, her mind was still lingering over the immortal pathos of the old Hebrew benediction. It came back upon her, therefore, naturally, as she put her arms round her son and his betrothed; and, drawing them both to her, while she rested her brow between their shoulders, she repeated with an earnest kindliness of tone, "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you, and

be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace!"

After a few moments of silence, Mrs. Forbes took Mary in both her arms; and looking at the beautiful young face radiant with a happiness which she had long wished to see there, she said, "I never knew the joy of having a daughter before!"

"And I never knew what it meant to have a mother. Will you let me call you mother now—*always* after this?"

The answer came in a long embrace. During the pause young Forbes slipped quietly out of the room, feeling that he might well leave the daughterless mother for a little to the joy of her newly-found daughter, and the motherless daughter to the joy of her newly-found mother. When he returned a short time afterwards, he found the two in the dining-room, Mary assisting his mother to put a little supper on the table; and there was something very pleasant to him in the manner of his betrothed, as if she were not only anxious to relieve his mother, but realised already her right to feel at home in his home.

As he entered the room, his mother turned to him and said, "Eh! Willie, I never thought you you would deceive your old mother this way."

"It's myself I deceived, mother; or rather I've been trying to deceive myself for weeks, but you see I've failed at last."

"Aye, I told you, you would soon be as daft as any of us about Mary."

"I don't think I'm daft at all, mother. On the contrary, I don't think I ever did, or that I'm ever likely to do, a wiser thing all my life. It's Mary there that's daft; and—what's worse—she's been trying to make me daft wi' self-conceit. Just imagine her comparing me to King Arthur, and I don't know what else, as if I was to be a new kind o' knight-errant, setting out on all sorts o' grand adventures. I just hope she'll not find her poor knight turning out a very whimsical sort o' Don Quixote after all."

"O, Mrs. Forbes, don't you think he's pretty hard on me already?"

"Indeed he is; but never mind him, dear. I told you he would be clean daft about getting such a treasure of a wife; and you can see now I was right, in spite of all he says about his being so wise. We'll have to put up wi' his nonsense a wee till he gets sobered down again."

And so the supper passed amid little pleasantries, such as naturally arise out of minds in a mood of

serene happiness. It was past midnight when the happy lover took his betrothed home. As she tripped quietly on tiptoe to her own room, she peeped into her father's, and was pleased to find him fast asleep. She was able therefore to feel that he did not seem to have missed her during her unusual absence. She was also relieved from any temptation to unburden herself of the joy which was ready to bubble over through every channel of expression, and to keep for her father what, with his old-gentlemanly manners, she knew would be the deeper gratification of learning about her joy next evening when his consent would be formally asked by her lover.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A Happy New Year.

" Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
For those that here we see no more ;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind."

—*In Memoriam.*

The incidents, with which the previous chapter closes, occurred among the last days of November. Meanwhile, arrangements were being rapidly pushed forward for introducing the new order of things in the Arderholm mill with the New Year. Forbes and Nicoll had both pitched upon New Year's Day as most appropriate for the purpose. The day was therefore to be commemorated not only as the ordinary festival of a New Year, but as one of special festivity for the people of Arderholm.

Whenever Nicoll was informed by Forbes of the betrothal, and had offered, as he did very heartily, his congratulations, he said, " Why not have the wedding on New Year's Day ? "

Forbes himself, with the eagerness of a young lover for the realisation of his hopes, was, naturally enough, pleased with the suggestion; but, when mooted to the ladies, it was at first thought to be impracticable. Probably maidens in general like to dally for a few months with the prospective picture of marriage before facing the reality, and Mary Boyd seemed to shrink from undertaking so suddenly the proposed revolution in her life. Mrs. Nicoll declared that the trousseau could not be got ready, nor the other arrangements made, in such a limited time. But it was observed that Mrs. Forbes sat silently reflecting on the proposal, while the others were expressing their dissent; and when appealed to at last for her opinion, expressed herself in favour of it quite emphatically. It seemed to fall in with some other ideas of hers on the subject of the wedding. Accordingly it was at last agreed to enhance the festal character of the coming New Year's Day with this additional festivity.

After the agreement had been reached, Mrs. Forbes arranged that she should go with Mary to explain matters to her father and secure his consent to the proposal. Of course he shrank at first from the thought of parting with his daughter so soon;

but fortunately he pleaded the more disinterested objection founded on the alleged impossibility of getting everything ready on such short notice. This gave Mrs. Forbes the opportunity she desired of carrying out her own private plan.

"Now, Mr. Boyd," she said, "you're not to worry yourself about getting things ready. I'm going to look after them myself. I know it's very selfish in me, but you must just let me have my own way. You see I've no daughter of my own to interest me in preparations for her wedding, and this is the only chance I'll ever have of enjoying a pleasure of the kind."

"It's just like you, Mrs. Forbes, to do such a kindness for my poor lassie, and to make us believe that you're doing it for your own sake, and not for hers."

"But, Mr. Boyd, there are a great many things to be looked after, that you gentlemen don't understand, and women just take a perfect delight in them."

"Well, well, Mrs. Forbes, I feel it's all very true that you say. It has been a worry to me the last day or two, that Mary has no mother to help her at the great event of her life. But I'll not think of her as my poor motherless lassie any longer. I'm

sure her own mother couldn't have been kinder to her than you have been."

"Then it's all settled, Mr. Boyd. Mary's going to Glasgow wi' Mrs. Nicoll and me to-morrow. I have to get some things for myself, and we'll just get everything she needs at the same time."

Thus the wedding was arranged for New Year's Day. The news soon spread throughout the village, and vague rumours also became current of some pleasing announcement that was to be made to the employees of Forbes & Co. Nothing definite, however, was known of this till the Saturday before the New Year, which began on the following Thursday. On that Saturday, as the workers were leaving the mill, they received, along with their weekly wages, each a little booklet. It consisted simply of four leaves, stitched into a stiff cover of cardboard, so that it could be more conveniently preserved. It contained an announcement, very simple and unpretentious in its tone, about the future management of the mill. The announcement was signed by William George Forbes and James Nicoll, and it addressed the employees as "fellow-workers." It began by stating that the business of the mill had, by the ability of its founder, the late Mr. George Forbes, attained a very gratifying success, and that

there was good reason to hope that its success would be continued. But the success of such a business must always depend, in an important degree, on the intelligent and conscientious industry of the operatives; and, therefore, it seemed but just that they should enjoy a fair share of the benefits of success. Accordingly, it would be the primary object of the management to guarantee to every worker the best wages given in the trade for his or her work. But, over and above these wages, the management proposed to give to every worker, an additional wage or bonus at the end of each year, to be regulated by the success of the business for the year. For this year, the bonus was to be one-tenth of the wages received. This would be paid to all the workers as they were leaving their work on Hogmanay, as the Scotch call New Year's Eve.

Other benefits of a more indirect kind were foreshadowed, but about them fuller information would be communicated on New Year's Day at a festivity, to which all the workers were invited.

The festal day arrived at last. It was, fortunately, one of those bracing winter days, on which the thermometer, having barely touched the freezing point during the night, rises ten or twelve degrees above it by noon. All through the morning, the village was

animated with an unusual stir. The children were playing on the streets instead of being at school. Groups of men sauntered about the doors in holiday ease. Lads and lasses began to show themselves in holiday attire. Many were still busy adding one more flag or other bit of decoratio.. to the front of their houses. As the morning advanced toward noon, various groups began to gather in the neighbourhood of the parish church. The church itself had been crowded to its full capacity an hour before; and for a long distance, the road leading to the church was lined on each side by a row of sympathetic spectators, eagerly waiting the arrival of the bridal party.

By noon, the sun was struggling with ruddy face through the hazy atmosphere, and the cheerful weather combined with all the happy circumstances of the day to keep the crowd in good humour. The church clock had not begun to peal twelve, when a carriage from Burnside appeared, with the bridegroom and his mother, and his old chum, Andrew Creighton, who was playing the part of groomsman. But a keener interest was displayed in the carriage, which followed a few minutes later, bringing the bride, with her father and her bridesmaid. The eagerness to obtain a near view of the bride, brought

the crowd so close to the carriage-wheels, that the driver was obliged to rein his horses to a slow walk; and the uncontrolled enthusiasm over the beauty of the bride, evoked a continuous buzz of kindly exclamations all along the road. Seldom, in fact, have human eyes been delighted with a more beautiful face, though much of its charm was withdrawn when the bride's modesty, unable to bear the gaze of the crowd, made her turn her eyes down the greater part of the way.

The marriage service was performed by Mr. Downes, with the assistance of the parish minister. After it was over, the wedding-party returned to Burnside for lunch, while the great body of the workers, with their wives, repaired to the mill, where the large storeroom had been converted, by suitable decoration, into a banqueting hall. All the arrangements here were admirable. Forbes and Nicoll agreed that the feast should be made such as their fellow-workers might long look back to with pleasure. They had, therefore, made a very liberal contract with a caterer in Glasgow, who undertook the management of the whole affair. In the arrangement, an allowance of two hours had been made for the feast; and as soon as it was over, about three in the afternoon, a messenger was despatched to the

party at Burnside, that they might join the meeting of the workers. A small platform for the wedding-party had been raised at one end of the room, and a programme of half-a-dozen short addresses had been drawn up, with interludes of music by an orchestra from Glasgow.

The chair was taken by Mr. Nicoll, who began by congratulating his audience on the happy circumstances under which they were met. He then went on to explain, in brief, business-like language, the schemes which it was intended to carry out for improving the condition of the workers. They were substantially the schemes which had been outlined in the conversations with Mr. Downes at Burnside. On finishing his explanation, Mr. Nicoll added—

"I need not point out that these projects are made possible by the high-minded generosity of our good friend and fellow-worker, Mr. Forbes. When he fell heir to his father's property, he might have done as thousands have done before him in a similar position. He might have built a princely mansion, and lived in princely style, using the profits of the business mainly for his own personal gratification, and caring very little about the well-being of the workers, by whose aid these profits are gained. I can say—for I know him well—that he has never thought of his

inheritance as a gift of fortune to himself, to be spent just as he pleases. He has always thought more of the duties which it imposes on him; and—very properly, as I think—he sees that his first duty is to the men and women, the lads and lasses, who work here from morning to night, week in and week out all the year round, to make this business profitable. He is, in fact, taking us all in as partners with him in the business; and I am sure you will agree with me when I say that we need not seek any better occupation in life than to be partners with such a man in a business conducted in such a spirit.

"It is eminently fitting that a day, which is so happy for us all, should be the happiest in his life. His happiness is all the greater, for I know that his wife is as good as you all know her to be bonny, and that it will be the chief pleasure of her life to help her husband in working out his plans for your well-being. I am sure you will all join me heartily in wishing the young couple a long life and all the happiness they so richly deserve. Let me ask you to express your wishes by a good rousing cheer."

At the call the whole audience rose, the men waving their hats and the women their handkerchiefs; and the cheer was renewed again and again,

so that some minutes elapsed before calm was restored.

Then Forbes rose and began, like Nicoll, by addressing his audience as fellow-workers. "Mr. Nicoll," he said, "has explained to you the plans we have formed, and I need not add to his explanation. I thought that was all he was going to say. If I had known that he was going to flatter me as he has done, I would have bargained with him beforehand either to drop the flattery altogether, or at least to keep it within bounds."

"Ye weel deserved it a'," was heard from a voice which sounded like Dugald M'Killop's: and "That's true," was echoed by many voices all over the room.

"No, no, my good friends," Forbes continued. "I can't see where I deserved it at all. I don't feel as if I were making any sacrifice. There may be—I daresay there are—plenty of men who like the splendid style of living that Mr. Nicoll described. But I never had any taste for that sort of thing, and it has never cost me a moment's struggle to give it up. If it had cost me any sacrifice, surely I may well feel that I am infinitely repaid in the enthusiastic affection with which I have been received; and I have to thank you all for what will always be remembered by me as one of the happiest moments

of my life. But the happiness of the moment reminds me that I have now to speak not only for myself, but for another."

At this the enthusiasm of the audience was renewed, as the speaker turned to his bride who was sitting near him on the platform, and she, with modest, natural grace rose, advanced to the place where he stood, and slipped her arm into his, while she looked up to him with a young wife's loving admiration glistening in her eyes. Again every one rose to cheer with waving hats and handkerchiefs; and Forbes, who had intended to make some further remarks, felt that this enthusiastic scene formed a more fitting close to his address than any words he could speak. Accordingly, after standing for a minute to acknowledge their hearty reception, he and his bride bowed to the audience and retired to their seats.

In the programme it had been arranged that each of the foremen from the different departments of the mill should give a short address. Most of the addresses were simply formal congratulations, and were somewhat spoiled by the effort of the speakers to drop their native dialect and adopt the style of cultured oratory. But Mike Sullivan, who closed this series of speeches, happily avoided this error.

It had, of course, been expected that Dugald M'Killop would have performed the duty of representing the carpenter's shop. But his refusal was decided.

"I never spoke in public but ance," he said. "It was at a kirk meeting. I was sitting in a back seat, and never thocht o' speakin'. But maist o' the speakers was talkin' sic doonricht nonsense, I could stand it nae langer; I buit tae say something at last. Sae I stood up, and I micht ha'e got on weel aneuch if they had let me staun whaur I was; but whanever I begood tae speak, they a' cried tae me tae gang forrit. And forrit I gaed tae the precentor's dask; but whan I got there, I saw a thoosan' een a' soomin' in the air afore me, and glowerin' at me wi' fearsome looks. I grew as dizzy as if I had ta'en ower muckle drink, and whether I was staunin' on my heid or my feet, I couldna tell. But, what was warst o' a', I couldna mind a'e word o' what I was ettlin' tae say. So I had just tae stagger back tae my seat like a fou man withoot speakin' a word, and a' the folk lauchin' at me as if I was a born idiot. Na, na; catch me makin' a fule o' mysel' like that again!—But there's Mike Sullivan, my richt haun' man. Mike's got Irish bluid in him, and that

gi'es him a gift o' the gab. And he's a sensible chield forbye."

It was thus that Mike came to speak for the carpenter's shop. Like the other speakers who had a similar task, Mike began with an artificial effort at a classical style: but after a sentence or two, he relapsed into his native tongue, and the change showed its effect at once upon his audience.

"I think," he said, while the interest and the applause of the audience increased, "I'm awin' mair tae the young maister nor ony body else in the mill. It's a guid mony years since he did me the best turn that onybody could hae dune me at the time; he fairly knocked the conceit oot o' me. It may be a' very weel, as I've heard folks say, tae hae a guid conceit o' yoursel'; but it maun be for things that it's richt tae be prood aboot, and it's a terrible misfortune tae be conceited aboot things that oucht rayther tae mak' ye ashamed. Noo, that was my misfortune whan I was a laddie at the scule, and twice it brocht me tae a kin' o' fecht wi' the young maister. I can tell ye I got mair than I bargained for, though it was nae mair nor I deserved: I cam' aff second best baith times. And than Mr. M'Killop took me in haun' and learnt me a different sort o' conceit. He learnt me to be prood o' daein' a gude workmanlike

job. I wad sae mair aboot Mr. M'Killop's gudeness tae me and tae mony anither chiel' that micht maybe, like mysel', hae been an idle vaigabond the day, but for him. But I'm fear'd he wad gi'e me an unco flytin' the morn's morning for praisin' him tae his face. For, though ye a' ken that he's aye ready, wi' his kind heart, tae dae a freendly turn tae everybody, he doesna ken himsel' hoo gude he is; he's just as blate aboot himsel' as the weeest laddie or lassie in the mill."

"Hear, hear!" was called by Mr. Nicoli, while the speaker was further encouraged by shouts of "That's true," "It's a' true, Mike," from every part of the room.

"Aweel," Mike continued, "Maister William George—that's what we ca'd him than—he dang a' the conceit oot o' me, and I'm real thankfu' for 't. And whan I saw him and his wife staunin' there the day—the bonniest sicht that ever blessed my een—it brocht tae my mind the first time he gied me a lickin'. It was for dingin' Miss Boyd's books oot o' her haun'—muckle coof that I was! I can maist imagine I see him pickin' up the books aff the glaury road, like a wee gentleman as he was than, and takin' his clean handkercher oot o' his jaiket

pouch, and dichtin' the glaur aff the batters o' the books. But I'm gaun to be upsides wi' him at last."

Mike had been followed so far with somewhat uproarious, though kindly, laughter and applause at the close of almost every sentence; and the general interest was now quickened afresh to catch what was coming.

"For," he continued, amid the silence of eager expectancy, "I've got a lass o' my ain noo; and though we're no buckled thegither yet, we'll no need tae wait lang wi' that nice bit o' bankpaper that was put intae my haun alang wi' my wages yestreen."

Then apparently Mike was captivated with the idea of bringing his betrothed forward to his side, and standing with her before the audience, as the newly-married couple had done. So he turned to Janet, who was sitting behind him, and made her a sign which (it is to be feared) was somewhat in the nature of a wink, accompanied by a homely nod. A light laughter rippled all round the room, prelude to a more stormy explosion that seemed ready to burst out while the audience were held in suspense waiting for the issue of Mike's appeal to Janet. As she did not immediately respond, her lover stepped back a pace and took her by the hand. She still showed strong reluctance, blushing all over to her very neck.

Her reluctance passed over into evident irritation, as Mike seemed determined to drag her forward by main force; and when at last she had to yield to his strength, she rushed at him and gave him a ringing slap on the cheek, which tinged his face with a crimson almost as deep as her own blush.

"I'll learn ye better mainners afore folk, my man!"

Her irritation, however, as usual, subsided as quickly as it rose; and she and Mike had returned to their former seats, while all trace of their momentary disagreement had vanished before the uproarious merriment which they had caused had died away. Quiet was restored at last by the chairman rising to bring the proceedings to a close.

"I don't know," he began, "whether Mr. Sullivan and his betrothed had arranged this scene beforehand, but they couldn't have planned a merrier finish to the fun of the day. I think I may speak in the name of all the workers in the mill when I assure them that we all look forward with pleasure to their expected wedding, and that we wish them all the happiness they deserve. I am sure, also, that every one must have been pleased at the kindly good-h...nour with which Mr. Sullivan told us of his boyish

defeats. There are not many who derive profit from such defeats, as he has done.

"And now I have to announce that the proceedings of the day are over. It was thought desirable to have this meeting in the afternoon rather than the evening; for it was felt that, if our happy gathering were protracted to a late hour at night, it would have made the day something of a weariness at last, and might have left the effect of its fatigues upon our spirits to-morrow, so that it might have proved a somewhat weary day too. We can now return to our homes at this early hour, and be at our posts again in the morning, feeling that we have enjoyed a pleasure that leaves no sting behind."

The happy gathering then broke up.

As the workers were leaving, the young couple placed themselves in a convenient position, and shook hands with as many as they could reach, charming all by their kindly smile, or a kindly word which was long remembered afterwards. Mike and Janet were made specially happy by the heartiness of their reception, and Janet was raised to a state of rapture by the peculiar graciousness of the young bride to her. Her delight coloured all her talk with her lover on the way home. For, as the evening was still early, though dark, many stragglers wended

their way slowly homewards discussing the events of the day; and among them Mike and Janet might have been overheard conversing for a while before parting at the garden-hedge of Burnside.

"O Mike!" Janet exclaimed, "I'm feared I gied ye ower hard a slap that time."

"Nae fears o' that, Janet. I wad rather get a gude slap frae your haun than be patted on the cheek wi' ony ither haun in the worl'."

"But I'm awfu' vext, Mike, for makin' sic a fule o' mysel' afore a' thae folk. I'll hae tae try and behave better efter this, if ye'll forgie me this time."

"Hoots, Janet, dinna mak' sic a steer aboot a flea's bite. It was just a bit o' fun, and the folk had a gude lauch ower't a'."

"Aweel, Mike, I maun learn tae haud in my temper."

"But what was't that put ye in sic a temper wi' me? I just wanted ye tae come forrit the way the young mistress did, and I thocht ye wad look just aboot as bonny as her."

"I was na angry wi' ye ava. Losh me! I was real prood o' ye, Mike. Did ye no see there was na ane o' the speakers got sic a cheerin' as they gied ye? Whan I saw ye staunin' there, and heard ye speakin' afore a' that crood just as bauld as Mr. Nicoll or the

minister, thinks I tae mysel' I'm gey weel aff tae hae sic a clever strappin' chield for a lad."

"Weel, Janet, what was't that put ye in sic a temper?"

"I'm telling ye, Mike, I wasna in a temper wi' ye ava. But I'm no used tae staun' afore folk, and speak up tae them like the young mistress. I'm ower blate for that, Mike; and whan ye askit me tae come forrit afore siccan a crood, losh me! I nearly swarfed. For a minnet I clean forgot whaur I was; and whan I slappit ye in the face, as sure's death, Mike, I didna mean't; I just fairly lost my senses, and didna ken what I was daein."

"It's a' bye noo, Janet; sae ye needna fash your thoomb aboot it ony mair."

"Weel, I'll try and mak' up for't, Mike, by being a gude wife tae ye by and by."

"But whan is't tae be, Janet? I can mairry ye noo as sune's ye like. My wages is tae be twenty-five shillin's a week efter this, and the five pound odds I got yestreen 'll dae fine for the plenishin'."

"I hae a bit tocher mysel', Mike. For I've hardly ever had tae waur a penny o' my fee the haill time I've been at Burnside. The mistress has been that gude tae me wi' presents."

"Weel, what's the use o' waitin', Janet?"

"It wadna look weel tae throw up my place afore the term. Ony way, I wad like tae bide a wee, and get acquaint wi' the young mistress. D'ye ken what she said tae me the nicht whan she cam' ower tae shake hauns wi' us? 'Janet,' says she, 'I hope ye're no going tae be mairrit for a little yet. I'm afraid I can't do withoot ye at Burnside.' Was't no real gude o' her, Mike?"

"Aye, Janet; it's just like her. But what did you say tae that?"

"Weel, Mike, of coorse I couldna but be polite tae her whan she was sae polite tae me. Sae I just tell't her I wad be real prood tae stay in her service. And wad ye believ't? She thankit me as if I had been daein her some wonnerfu' gude turn, and than she shakit hauns wi' me a second time."

"It's wonnerfu' the kind-like way she shakes hauns wi' us a'."

"Aye, Mike, it's true what ye said. Her's is a bonny haun. For a' the worl' it's as saft as a peedoo's feathers. And than she has sic a kind heart forbye. But I maun say gude-nicht, Mike."

"Weel, Janet, I'll no press ye ony mair the noo aboot the day. But whan the term comes roon, I'll haud ye tae your promise."

"Vera weel, Mike. And noo, tae mak up for that slap I gied ye, ye can tak' twa kisses the nicht."

"That's gran' pay, Janet."

"Ods, Mike, ye shouldna gie sic a lood smack. I'm sure auld Kirstie maun hae heard that ane, and she'll never let me hear the end o't."

"Aweel, Janet, I'll no mak' sic a lood noise wi' the second ane."

"Losh! Mike, ye're kittlin' me wi' thae rouch whuskers o' yours.—There noo; that 'll dae for ae nicht. Ye better gang hame noo tae your mither."

"Weel, Janet, gude-nicht; and dinna forget your promise, come the term."

CHAPTER XXVII.

The Outlook.

"We look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

—*2 Peter*, iii. 13.

I left Arderholm shortly after the events recorded in last chapter, and did not visit the place again for nearly ten years. On my return it was difficult to recognise the old, straggling, overgrown village which I had left, in the new town into which it had been transformed during my absence. The most noticeable change in this transformation was the disappearance of "the row," as it used to be called—that is, the row of cottages running close to the bank of Arderburn, and forming the only street of the primitive village, as described in the opening chapter of this story. The cottages had all been removed, and the land, to the extent of about a dozen acres on either side of the burn, had been cleared and levelled and converted into a public park. The separated

portions of the park were connected by a picturesque iron bridge, the design for which had been sketched by Mrs. Nicoll. The bridge formed part of a wide carriage-drive through the middle of the park. With the exception of this road and a few narrow footpaths, the park was left in great patches of grass, each of which, on fine evenings, generally tempted a group of young people eager to enjoy some healthy outdoor sport. During the day these grassy spots formed a splendid playground for the schools, which were situated in the immediate neighbourhood. For the educational wants of Arderholm had far outgrown the capacity of the old parish school, even though its equipments had been expanded from time to time. Now there were two schools for primary education; and these, being situated on opposite sides of the park, were convenient not only for the different parts of the little town, but also for the common playground. In addition to these a high school had been started; the Arderholm Academy it was called. Here Mr. Forbes and Nicoll were carrying out some plans of their own for adapting education more fully to the wants of modern society; but these need not interrupt our story.

The other features of the transformation scene

which lay before me followed the lines which had been sketched in the conversations of Forbes and Nicoll, with their friend Downes; and therefore they do not require to be described in further detail. I was told that visitors to the new Arderholm were heard at times inquiring of the residents, "But where are your poor?" And Nicoll, one evening when I was with him, tickled me immensely by his comical account of an extremely orthodox old elder who had made a pretty pile of money by prudently buying the labour he required always in the cheapest market. The old man found the state of things in Arderholm gave a painful shock to his ideas of industrial life, and at last gave vent to his horror by declaring to Nicoll that he was going clean against the Bible doctrine, that we are to have the poor with us always.

Nicoll dwelt on the funny side of this incident, but the part he had played was told to me more fully one evening when I was visiting Burnside. This hospitable home had become peculiarly delightful. The elder Mrs. Forbes took an active interest in the work that was going on in Arderholm, and that interest had given a spiritual serenity to her face as if it bore a constant outlook into the divine charities of life. Her hair had lost none of its massive folds,

but its raven hue was transmuted into a silver gray, forming a sort of luminous aureole over the saintly benevolence of her face. The beauty of the younger Mrs. Forbes had grown only more majestic since I saw her at her wedding, by the development of young motherly characteristics. For Burnside was now enlivened by a second generation of children. Of these, two were boys, about whom Nicoll had spoken to me with almost exultant joy, as giving hope that their father's ideals of industrial life would be sustained for another generation yet. Besides these there was a little girl, whose golden hair bore promise of her rivalling the charm of her mother.

In the course of conversation during the evening, I had made some reference to Nicoll's humorous account of the orthodox old elder; and Forbes was thus led to make some interesting additions to the account.

When the elder quoted the Bible doctrine about the perpetuity of the poor, Nicoll replied in a tone alternating between good-humoured banter and earnest indignation.

"Surely," he said, "we're not going to keep people poor on purpose—merely to fulfil a fancied requirement of the gospel. Why, my good sir, the gospel, as the Master Himself described it, is prim-

arily a gospel preached to the poor; and you don't mean to say that it's a gospel—that it's glad tidings—to poor people to tell them that they need never hope to get into a comfortable position in the world, that they must make up their minds to remain poor always. But if it is a requirement of the gospel that there should always be poor people in the world, why don't you and I fulfil the requirement ourselves, instead of compelling others to fulfil it? We might take a vow of poverty. We might give up all our comforts, and refuse any remuneration for our labour beyond the wages that the poorest labourer gets. We might even, in hard times, join the army of the unemployed, and get a taste of absolute destitution now and then. There would be some sense in that, if we believe it's necessary to have some poor in the world always. But what sense can there be in forcing poverty on others who don't believe in it at all, and who can't be expected to take it any more kindly than ourselves? Then," Nicoll urged as the talk went on, "we have plenty of poor always with us to give us a good opportunity of exercising all the virtues of Christian humanity."

"I haven't seen any of them," the visitor remarked.

"Oh! but you have," was the quick reply, "though maybe you didn't think of them as poor. We don't compel our poor to proclaim their poverty in rags and in faces pinched with hunger and cold. You probably saw that they were tolerably well fed, well clad, and well housed."

"I confess I can't understand what you mean by calling people poor when you say they're so well-off."

"I call people poor if they're unable to earn a living—unfit for the labour by which alone the necessaries and comforts of life can be produced. Now, we have widows and orphans, we have a few workers laid aside from old age, and we have more laid aside by temporary sickness and accident. I was one of the poor myself, no further gone than last month, when I was laid up for a week with influenza. All that week I couldn't earn a penny, and yet my salary wasn't stopped. What conscience could I have if I stopped the wages of our workers when they're laid up in the same way? I don't want to feel when I'm laid up, and I don't want them to feel when they're laid up, as if we were a set of beggars depending on any charity that may be doled out to us. And consequently we insure one another against the accidents of life as well as we can, and so every one of us can take advantage of the insurance,

to which he contributes, without feeling at all reluctant on the score of giving up his independence."

Such was the general drift of Mr. Nicoll's plea, as reported to me by Forbes. Of course, the industrial ideas of Arderholm were too violently opposed to the orthodox visitor's whole system of thought, to find in it any intelligible place; and it seems that, in referring to the subject afterwards, he was accustomed to speak sadly of the lack of evangelical doctrine displayed in the movement at Arderholm.

In talking the matter over one evening with Nicoll and Forbes, I was led to remark that the poor-rate in the parish must be considerably reduced.

"It became a vanishing fraction," was the reply, "from the moment our scheme began, and it has vanished altogether now. Of course, we have a few paupers in the parish, who have no claim on the mill; but these are easily overtaken by the private charity, and by the collections for the poor in the two churches, both of which are able to act in a liberal spirit, as they have no very large demands to meet."

"But," I urged, "don't you find it a rather serious drain on your funds to pay wages to your working-people when they're laid aside from ill-health or accident?"

"Well, of course, we thought it right to guard against abuse of the regulation. We require the doctor's certificate, and we charge a nominal fee for that. The fee includes the doctor's attendance. It's a small percentage—a tenth, I think—of their wages during the time they are laid up. If the case is serious or likely to be protracted, we insist on their going into the hospital, and then they pay a fourth of their wages to the hospital fund. That pays for their board as well as medical attendance while they're in the hospital, and the other three-fourths go to support their families if they have any, or are credited to themselves if they're single."

"That seems very reasonable. I fancy most of them will be only too glad to take advantage of the hospital when they need it. I haven't seen anything about the improvements in Arderholm that pleased me more."

"Yes," said Nicoll, "we're rather proud of the hospital. Of course, it's mainly Dr. M'Bean's doing. We found we had to relieve him from his practice altogether, and make him general medical officer of the place. Then before we began to build he took a month's holiday to see the best institutions of the kind on the Continent, as well as in Britain; and then he made his plans wi' the help of an old chum

of his, who is practising as an architect in Edinburgh. It's extraordinary the enthusiasm they both threw into the scheme. They are both men of scrupulous, almost Quixotic integrity in regard to money matters, so that we had no difficulty about giving them *carte blanche* to do their best; and I don't think they spent a pound for which we haven't got a substantial equivalent. All the medical men that have been down here from Edinburgh and Glasgow, say there's nothing finer in Scotland."

"I can easily understand that; but I suspect it involves a heavy drain on your funds."

"Not so heavy as I expected. You must bear in mind that the doctor has carried out some valuable sanitary improvements since you left. You will remember that we had no drainage when you were here. Now every part of the town is thoroughly drained, and in dry weather the drains are flushed with a powerful stream of water as often as the doctor orders. Then you will remember, besides, that we had no proper supply of water. Except in two or three houses that had private wells, the people generally drew their water from the burn, where they also emptied all sorts of refuse. I daresay you've heard what we've done with the Harebell How?"

"Yes," I replied, "I was told you had made a reservoir of it."

"It was almost a perfect natural reservoir," Nicoll went on. "It required merely a few yards of artificial embankment; and as these are scarcely noticed, the reservoir looks like a natural tarn in the mountains. Well, the new water supply and drainage, along with more thorough scavenging, have diminished disease very sensibly already; so that the charge on the hospital fund is not so heavy as we expected."

It was in pleasant chats of this kind that I became acquainted with the work that was being done in elevating the life of my native place. I thus found also numerous opportunities of renewing the kindly friendships of former days. All my old friends were evidently enjoying the general prosperity and social kindliness of the place. Of course, one of my earliest visits was to Sandie Craig, and the gleam that lit up his genial face as he recognised me entering his shop was a sight to make one happy for days. He showed scarcely the faintest change, except for a subdued quiet in his manner, contrasting with the nervous restlessness which disturbed even his habitual equanimity, for the time at least, as a result of the financial worry of ten years ago. After a few

minutes' talk, I had expected that he would have invited me upstairs to see Mrs. Craig. But I soon found that, however little he was changed himself, his whole environment was altered. The extensive distribution of the profits of the Arderholm Mill had of course increased the purchasing power of the whole community, and consequently Mr. Craig's business had advanced with a bound. He had therefore been obliged to remove his dwelling-place from the flat above his shop, and to utilise the place for storage. He was now living in one of a row of pretty villas which enlivened the solitude of what had been a very quiet country road, and was still spoken of simply as the Loan. I had therefore to accept an invitation to take tea at his house the following evening.

On my arrival I met, of course, with a very cordial reception from Mrs. Craig. But I had not been long in her parlour before I was startled by a child-voice occasionally trilling a few notes of a nursery rhyme, interrupted by merry laughter. I was still in wonder over the sound, and reluctant to give offence by betraying my ignorance, when a blonde little girl bounced into the room, and rushed into Mrs. Craig's arms. Perhaps because she divined my perplexity, my hostess at once entered into an

explanation, which became freer as the little girl slowly slipped down from her lap, and ran out of the room again.

It seems that, some six or seven years ago, Mrs. Craig had heard that a young cousin of hers, who had been married in Dundee about a year before, had become a widow, and then a mother within a month. When the second part of the news came, Mrs. Craig could not control her anxiety. "Sandie," she said to her husband, "I think I should go tae Dundee. That puir lassie has nane o' her ain friens —I mean nane o' oor faimily—aboot her awa' there, and maybe I micht be some help tae her in her trouble."

The husband of course consented, and the good woman started off next day. On her arrival, she found that her cousin was making no progress towards recovery from her confinement, but was, in fact, dangerously ill. However, she seemed greatly comforted by the presence of Mrs. Craig, who became a valuable aid in the sick-room. Still the patient declined sensibly from day to day, and before a week was over, it became evident that the end was not far off. Naturally, the young mother's suffering was painfully intensified by her anxiety about the new-

born child, and at last she gave a hint of it to her cousin.

"Dear me! Annie," was the reply, "surely ye're never lettin' that distress ye. Gin it comes tae the warst, ye ken fine the wee body 'ill never want a hame as lang's I leeve. 'Deed, naethin' wad pleasure my gude-man and me mair nor tae hae a bonny bairn like that in the hoose."

At this assurance a happy change flashed over the patient's face. All its agony seemed to vanish, and the remaining few days of her life were apparently passed in peaceful serenity of mind.

"The happy thankfu' look o' my puir cousin," said Mrs. Craig, as she finished her story, "comes back on me mony a time yet, and I can maist see't as distinct as if it was a pictur lyin' afore me; and the pleasure it gie's me, far mair nor pays me for ony trouble I've taen wi' her bairn. But, 'deed, the wee lassie pays as weel hersel', for she mak's things gevan different frae what they were in oor lanely hoose afore she cam'."

My hostess had scarcely finished her story when her goodman appeared: and, after a very hospitable meal, we spent a delightful evening in talk about old times. Our talk was interrupted for a few minutes by my host's customary evening service, which was

brought on a little earlier than it used to be, as he thought it his duty to give the benefit of its training to his little foster-child before she went off to her early bed. I was evidently expected to take my part in the service, and read a verse as it came to my turn; nor can I deny that this spiritual discipline, trivial though it may seem, is one that might with advantage be adopted generally where people are averse to any more pretentious form of worship.

The next day I went to see Mike Sullivan. I chose the dinner-hour, as I thought he could probably spare a few minutes off his meal more easily than off his work. I had heard that his mother was long dead; and I found he was living in a neat little cottage, which—he told me—he had built with the aid of a building society, and on which—he added, with some legitimate pride—there was not now a penny of debt. As the day was warm, the door stood open when I approached; and I saw that it led into a good-sized apartment, which evidently served the purpose of a general living-room, as well as a kitchen. Mrs. Sullivan was at a table, at which her children were taking their seats. They were two boys and a girl, but there was also a baby in an adjoining cradle, crowing lustily and stretching his

fat little arms aimlessly towards the group at the table.

When I asked for Mr. Sullivan, the goodwife replied with a cheery face and voice, "Just come in, sir; he'll be here in a meenit. The clock's just chappit twa, and he's never mair nor five meenits ahint the hoor."

I accepted her invitation. and sat down on a chair she offered. She then went on:

"If you'll excuse me, sir, I'll just gie the weans their dinner. They're just like a pack o' hungry tykes whan they come hame frae the scule; and than they hae tae gang back again, and they haena ower muckle time. Their faither aye tells me no to keep them waitin' for him. Wullie! you ask a blessin' the day."

The boy, thus summoned, spoke out boldly, though somewhat mechanically, the grace he had been taught, as if he were reciting a lesson at school. When he had finished, I assured Mrs. Sullivan that I hoped she would not allow me to put her or the children to any inconvenience.

"Forbye," she went on, catching up her previous remark to me without paying much attention to my assurance, "a fou mooth's a gran' thing for stoppin' the gab. They're unco quate the noo, for they're

blate afore a stranger. But, losh me! gin ye had heard them afore ye cam' in! They sometimes fairly deave me wi' their clatter, and I can hardlies get in a word mysel'. I tell them their tongues just gang clappin' like a change-hoose bell."

I thought it was perhaps not difficult to discern from which side of the house the children had inherited their propensity to chatter, if, indeed, it is not an universal endowment of healthy child-nature. But at this point the goodman returned.

As I was sitting at the open door enjoying the fresh air, he recognised me before he came in, and with a joyful exclamation held out his hand, while he called to me:

"Ye don't mean tae say 't! Is that really you! Man! a sicht o' ye's guid for sair een. Hoo lang is't since ye gaed awa'?"

"About ten years."

"Ten years! Dear me! it looks just like yesterday whan ye cam roon tae the auld hoose tae bid us guid-bye."

He then introduced me to Mrs. Sullivan.

"But, guidwife," he exclaimed, "here's you and the weans takin' your dinner, and an auld frien' comes tae see me, that I haena seen for ten year;

and nane o' ye ever thinks o' asking him, 'Hae ye a mou'?'"

"Losh me, guidman, ye needna affront me afore folk that way. I never thocht the gentleman would hae cared aboot oor plain dinner, or, 'deed, I would hae been gey prood tae hae him at the table. But there's nae time lost; we was just beginning whan ye cam' in."

"Weel, what hae ye got for us the day, guidwife?"

"It's the guid Scotch broth ye're a' sae keen aboot—raigular hotch-potch—wi' a' the vaigetables o' the simmer intil't."

"That's richt, guidwife. I aye think, if ye've got a bowl o' Scotch broth, ma certes, ye're no ill aff. Ye dinna need mukcle mair. It lines the stomach gey weel itsel'."

"That's just the way my mither used tae speak aboot her broth. 'Tak' yer fill o't, bairns,' she would say. 'It's meat as weel as drink.'"

I had been walking about all the early part of the day without any refreshment, and found the odours from Mrs. Sullivan's table had called out a sharp appetite. As the table looked scrupulously clean, and the hostess evidently kept herself as well as her surroundings extremely tidy, it required no very

urgent pressure to tempt me to test her cookery. She and her husband were delighted at my consent. For the children, indeed, I felt a little regret at first, for they were painfully abashed by the unusual presence of a guest. But the father and the mother were apparently pleased on the whole with the quiet. It enabled them to enjoy our conversation all the more fully, and the mother especially had no reason to complain that she did not get a chance of putting in a word herself. Besides, the children hurried through the meal with unusual expedition, and, after obtaining their mother's consent, rushed off, the boys to school, and the little girl to play outside in the summer sunshine. So, even my slight regret for the sake of the children was removed, and I was enabled to enjoy without a drawback the spontaneous kindliness of my hosts' hospitality.

I have sat at many a table with far more luxuries than reasonable men desire, and served by more waiters than any man needs; but I wish I could feel assured that I have always met with the same genuine courtesy which shone through all the untutored language and manners of this honest couple.

The furlough which I was enjoying at the time was short, and it was but a few days of it that could be devoted to Arderholm; but I could not leave

without calling on Dugald M'Killop. I learned that he lived still in his old cottage with his daughter as housekeeper, and I chose for my visit a Sunday afternoon, as a time when I should be likely to find the good old man at his best.

After the usual greetings, I ventured to remark, "I suppose you have given up work now. You've fairly earned a rest at your time of life."

"Sae the maisters said tae me langsyne. But I thocht it was nonsense for a man that has naething wrang wi' him tae be daunderin' aboot idle like a feckless gangrel body. Sae we argued aboot, aff and on, for the feck o' a month; but oor disputes endit at last by Mr. Nicoll tellin' me he thocht I wad dae mair service tae the mill if I gied a' my time tae my wark as foreman in the shop. And I couldna but alloo that he was richt; for it's geyan hard tae be plannin', and lookin' tae see your plans cairriet oot, gin ye hae tae be hemmerin' at some wee bit job o' your ain a' the time. 'Deed, sir, I was gey vexed whiles tae see that things werena dune exackly as I wanted, just because I was taen up wi' some wark o' my ain, instead o' lookin' efter the wark o' the haill shop."

"Well, that seems a good arrangement for all

parties, and I daresay it gives you all the leisure you want."

"Oh! whiles I'm busy aneuch; but whan they're no bye-ordinar thrang up at the shop, I can potter aboot doon here maist o' the efternune, if the wather's fine. And I'm no tethered tae the mortal hoor noo as I used tae be at the real-time. I can gang doon and tak' my pipe at the cosiest lug here wi' my book in my haun for haur-an-hoor without ha tae rin back tae the shop afore [illegible] swallowed. For ye ken I can aye hippen tae Mr Sullivan tae see that the wark's kept gaun whan my back's turned."

"That'll give you time to enjoy life pretty well now."

"Deed," replied Dugald, with a comical twinkle in his eye, and a chuckling laugh, "yes, whan I'm takin' things sae easy noo, it's a coarna relief tae [illegible]

"I confess I admire an honest workman, who has [illegible] as most soldiers or military officers should be guaranteed a retiring allowance [illegible] age, too."

"Aye, I see what ye would be at. You young gentlemen got some gran' ideas that we never heard o' when I was a young chap. The

maisters look in here whiles whan they're gaun by on a Sawbath efternune, and monny a canty crack we hae wi' ane anither aboot thae things. I hae tae tell them whiles that I'm an auld carl-man, and I'm feared my thochts hae gane intae a gey deep groove wae rinnin' sae lang on the auld roads. It's no easy workin' oot o' a groove that ye've been hoven deeper and deeper for years in your life, but I can help being cairriet on by the groove while the young maisters are in sic earnest aboot their plans for makkin' in the world, or at least the wee bit o' it that they're leevin' in."

"I dares say you feel that you couldn't easily find better employers."

"I'm fond o' them aye for ca'in them maisters yet wi' my auld fashioned ways, but they winna thole the ae ane than the ither. 'Dugald,' says Mr. William to me ae day, 'I think I work just about as hard as ye dae yoursel'.' 'Deed,' says I, 'ye work a hantle mair nor me noo, Mr. Weeliam; and ye were aye guid at your wark ever since I mind ye as a wee boy at the scule.' 'Weel, Dugald,' says he, 'I think I've a guid richt to be ca'ed your fellow-workman; and that's a far grander name than maister or employer.' Man!" added Dugald after a pause, and his voice rose to the impressive tone of

solemn music, "I couldna help thinkin' tae mysel', the young maister's got nearer tae the heart o' the Great Maister o' us a' than I hae dune yet, though I'm nigh three times aulder nor him. And that nicht, whan I was readin' my Bible, I happened tae come on that gran' passage in the fifteenth o' John, 'Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends.'"

Dugald remained silent as if hushed by the noble sentiment of his quotation, and I did not feel inclined myself to break the silence for a few moments. At last I remarked, "Dugald, it's a pity you didn't think of quoting that to Mr. William himself."

"Ye're richt there; but, man! my thochts daunder on at a gey slow gait, and the best o' them whiles come creepin' in just whan it's a wee bit ower late tae mak' ony use o' them. But ye're no tae think I'm aye poorin' cauld watter doon the back o' the young maisters. 'Deed, no. As I was saying, they whiles cairry me awa' wi' them afore I ken whaur I am. I mind ance—it canna be mony weeks sinsyne—they were baith sittin' here and talkin' awa' as usual. I was fairly liftit aff my feet wi' what they were sayin' and the way they said it; and at last, whan I got a chance o' pittin' in a word mysel',

I tell't them I was thinkin' o' what the twa disciples said tae ane anither efter they had been speakin' wi' the Lord on the road to Emmaus. And, says I, I thocht the spirit o' Christ wad maybe rise again in the world o' trade, whaur it's been deid and buriet this lang time back, gin maisters and men ower a' the world would work thegither the way ye're tryin' tae get us a' tae dae here in Arderholm. And as ye were talkin' tae me the noo, I could hardly help croonin' ower the words o' the twa disciples, 'Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way?'"

As Dugald stopped here for a few moments, I asked him, "Well, Dugald, what did they sae tae that?"

"Man! ye should hae seen hoo blithe they were. They baith got up—they were just gaun awa at ony rate—and they gied me an unco hearty shake o' the haun. 'Thank ye, Dugald,' they said, 'that 'ill cheer us often whan we're doon in the heart.' I was real glad mysel' tae see them sae cheery."

I rose to go, but Dugald detained me for a few minutes as we stood ready to shake hands, and the last words I heard from him cling to me with a solemn interest still.

"Just whan ye cam in," he said, while he pointed to a Bible lying open on the table, "I was readin' in the Revelation aboot 'the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.' And d'ye ken what I was thinkin' aboot it?"

"I'm afraid I can't guess."

"Weel, it was this. I mind whan oor gude Queen —God bless her!—cam' tae Glesca lang syne. I had a job there at the time, and of coorse I buit tae gang wi' the crood and see her. Weel, I wasna very auld at the time, and I had got my notions o' a queen, I daursay, frae fairy stories and siclike trash. At ony rate, I mind I was lookin' for a goargeous chariot, and somebody sittin' in't that was bye-ordinar grand, wi' a gowden croon on her heid and a gowden sceptre in her haun, and her claes sparklin' a' ower wi' diamonds like a jeweller's shop window. Bless me! I could hardly believe my een whan the crood gaed clean daft about a nice-lookin' woman that wasna half sae grandly dressed as dizzens o' the leddies in the stauns and windows roon aboot me. There she sat in a common cairriage, wi' a plain Paisla shawl on her back, just like ony douce sensible Scotch mither wi' her guidman at her side and her bairns

fornenst her. Sae whan I got hame that nicht, I couldna help saying tae mysel', 'Dugald, that 'ill be a lesson tae ye a' your days. That gran' leddy wasna gaun tae mak' a fule o' hersel' and her folk by buskin' hersel' up like a queen in a show. She kens weel aneuch that a croon and a sceptre and braw claes, even though they're glitterin' a' ower wi' jewels, are only the ootward show o' a queen, and hae naething tae dae wi' the real thing. The jewels, that mak' a real queen, maun be gifts o' the mind and heart, that fit her for the gran' wark she has tae dae in the world.'"

Dugald paused for a moment; but, as I said nothing, he went on as if calling his thoughts back to the point of his illustration—"Sae, whan I was readin' the noo aboot the New Jerusalem, wi' its walls built o' gowd and jasper and a' sorts o' praicious stanes, I begood tae think that we're ower keen tae tak' it a' just like bairns whan their wee heids are bizzin' wi' the fancies o' fairy stories. Maybe the New Jerusalem 'ill just be ony o' the auld toons in the world made cleaner, and healthier, and happier, wi' druckenness, and cheatin', and quarrellin', and ither sins driven clean awa'. Than ony toon can be turned intae a New Jerusalem whanever it's made a holy city; and, as for its bein' like a bride

adorned for her husband, I kenna a jewel for buskin' a bride, that a sensible man would think half as praicious as holiness o' character. Sae I'm thinkin', if we're to look for a new heaven and a new earth, we maun just set aboot the wark the maisters are tryin' tae dae here—tae mak' the toon we leeve in a place wherein dwelleth righteousness."

THE END.

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